

Sight and Sound

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FILM
REVIEWS



'The Lover':

**Serge Daney denounces
Annaud's cinema**

Signs and wonders:

**Michael Tolkin, writer of
'The Player', on his directing
debut 'The Rapture'**

Out of 'Despair':

**Fassbinder and Bogarde's
unpublished letters**



Who is the alien?

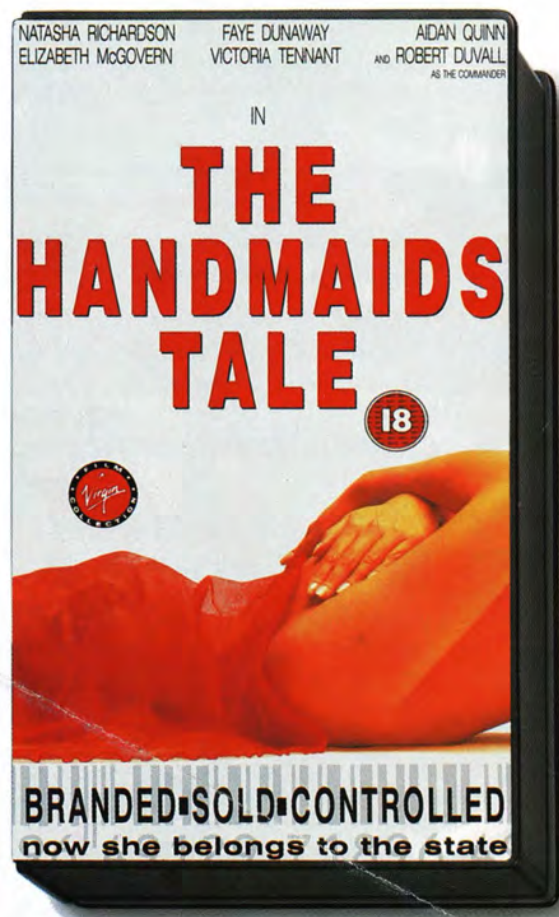
Amy Taubin on Alien³ Plus: fascinating aliens from Georges Méliès to John Carpenter

OUR PRICE

music

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THE HANDMAID'S TALE Pollution, nuclear accidents and genetic experimentation have rendered most women infertile. Those still capable of child-bearing are deemed 'Handmaids' and are assigned to Commanders, the men of the ruling elite. After trying to escape the new regime, Kate (Natasha Richardson) is made a Handmaid and assigned to a Commander (Robert Duvall) and his barren wife (Faye Dunaway). In order for Kate to become pregnant all three of them must partake in a humiliating sexual ceremony. Is there no way out of Kate's living nightmare...



THE REFLECTING SKIN Seven year old Seth Dove leads a perfectly normal childhood until a friend is murdered and his father is accused of the crime. Soon after, Seth's older brother, Cameron, returns from war and falls in love with a mysterious, reclusive woman called Dolphin Blue. Seth believes she is a vampire, and that he must save his brother from her evil grasp. His innocent misinterpretation of the adult world leads him to a tragedy that will haunt him for the rest of his life. Viggo Mortensen and Lindsay Duncan star in this compelling, discomfoting film.

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Sight and Sound



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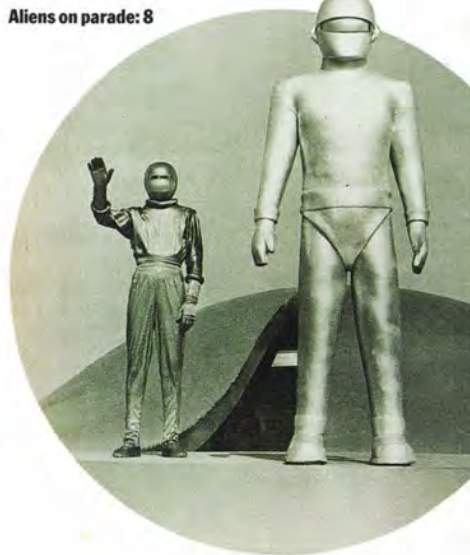
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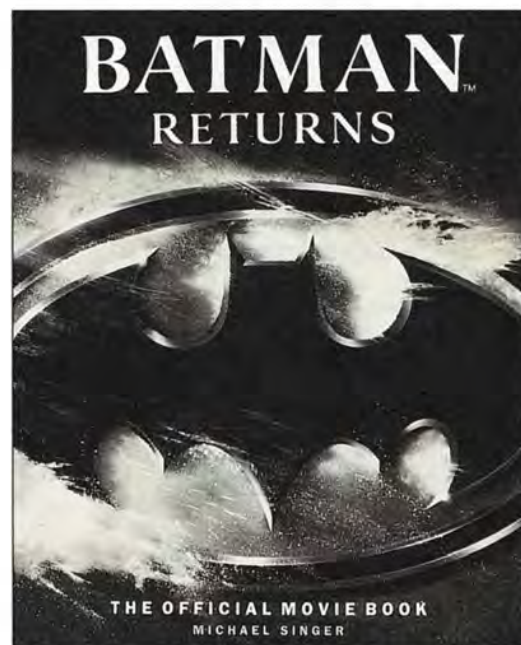
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125 colour photos and illustrations

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Gothic tales

Contributors to this issue

Stephen Bottomore is working on a book about the origins of cinema

Peter Dean is a freelance critic specialising in video

Michael Eaton's scripts include the award-winning *Fellow Traveller*

Goran Gocić is a critic living in Belgrade

Malcolm Imrie is an editor at Verso

Kevin Jackson edited Schrader on Schrader

Annette Kuhn's books include *Alien Zone*

Mark Lawson writes for the *Independent*

Graham Murdock is writing a book, *The Battle for TV*

John Orr is Reader in Sociology at Edinburgh University

Patrice Petro is author of *Joyless Streets: Women and Melodramatic Representation in Weimar Germany*

Ashish Rajadhyaksha is co-editing an encyclopaedia of Indian cinema

David Robinson's many books include a volume on music and silent film

Rod Stoneman is assistant commissioning editor for independent film and video, Channel 4

Amy Taubin is writing a book on *Taxi Driver*

Ginette Vincendeau is lecturer in film, University of Warwick

Wallace Watson's book on Fassbinder will be published later this year

Ben Woolley has recently completed a book on Virtual Reality

As everyone knows, the resources available for a British film are comically small when compared to any Hollywood production. Consider the resources available even to first-time US feature director David Fincher, whose *Alien³* opens in Britain in August. He had a budget of \$50 million and the backing of a powerful corporate campaign in the US to support his film, not to mention the virtue of being able to work within a popular genre that had structured the two earlier films in the trilogy.

It may be that such a high-profile, high-budget film has little to teach British film-makers, since British cinema exists in such a different, makeshift universe. Even *Howards End*, the Merchant Ivory prizewinner at Cannes, cost only \$6 million. But in one respect, the *Alien* trilogy may be worth pondering within the British context.

After all, the *Alien* films are genre movies that developed out of and draw upon a gothic imagination which has deep and powerful roots in British culture. There was an extraordinary blossoming of gothic fiction in the late eighteenth century, with *Frankenstein* as its best-known example, which continued through to the writings of late nineteenth-century England (including those of Oscar Wilde and Bram Stoker). British cinema, ranging from some of Powell and Pressburger through to particular Gainsborough melodramas, into Hammer, has confirmed that British culture has had a strong underbelly which might reasonably be described as 'gothic'. With a knowledge of this history, it seems only right that the first *Alien* movie in the trilogy should have been made by a British director, Ridley Scott, and that key figures in the third film are British, including

actors, the director of photography, the editor, and production designer.

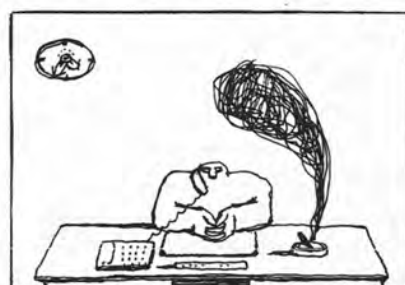
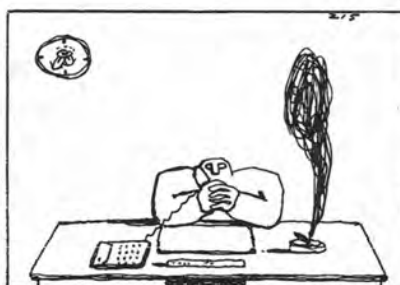
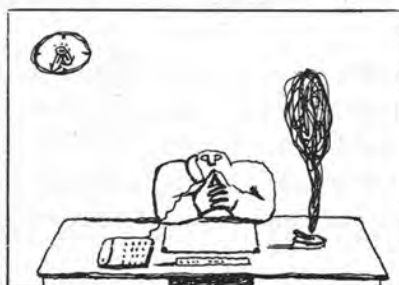
It is also noticeable how even British film-makers who are not usually associated with the gothic find it a resource that can be tapped: one has only to think, for example, of the gothic elements in both Lindsay Anderson's *Britannia Hospital* and Derek Jarman's *Edward II*, to take two radically different films. But despite the gothic tradition, and the reverence with which it is now viewed, there is little critical or institutional support for such gothic developments within current homegrown cinema. This is in spite of evidence that young British film-makers such as Richard Stanley (of *Hardware*), Paul Berry (whose animation *The Sandman* was seen recently on Channel 4) and Philip Ridley (*The Reflecting Skin*) are each in their own way fascinated by the possibilities of the gothic.

To hear some critics and industry people speak, one might think that the only reasonable choices for first-time British film-makers are either literary adaptation, or documentary drama, or the low art house (aka avant-garde) feature. Yet genre films – of which sci-fi/horror/thriller are the key contemporary examples – offer another path. And it would be encouraging to feel that institutions involved in sustaining film-making recognised this, more than they sometimes do.

While it would be foolish to demand that film-makers be pushed in the direction of gothic films, the presence of *Alien³* on our screens should at least remind everyone that powerful US corporations see gothic cinema as a good bet for a first-time director. It would be encouraging if our television and film industry, in this respect, imitated Hollywood.

JERRY ON LINE #1

James Sillavan – Peter Lydon ©



'Jerry, why the bad press about me and writers? I love writers... one of my best ex-friends is a writer. They only need look at the credits on our movies Jerry, there's usually 3 or 4 writers listed... what better sign of my commitment to the noble craft.'

Less players, some celebration

David Robinson in Cannes

Cannes 1992 reflected cinema on the way to an uncertain future. Deep beneath the Palais des Festivals is the market, where hundreds of booths line a maze of *allées*. The number of these that lay unoccupied this year was renewed evidence of the virtual extinction of so many smaller national cinemas – victims of recession or political revolutions or simply the inexorable invasions of Hollywood. In 1962, when international cinema was at a peak, thirty-five countries were represented in the Cannes competition. Thirty years later, the number is fifteen. There were no entries this year from the Middle or Far East, from India, or from the former socialist countries west of Russia; and only one film each from Latin America, Africa and Australasia. The rest of the competing films came from Europe and the United States.

Most striking was the sense of social malaise that pervaded so many movies. In the American films, this found expression in the kind of morbid, prurient violence that characterises Paul Verhoeven's *Basic Instinct* and David Lynch's *Twin Peaks: Fire Walk With Me*, neither of which seemed to merit a place in the competition. Out of competition, there was more violence in *Reservoir Dogs*, an incorrigibly flashy, unsparingly bloody story of crime and retribution – a calculated and effective shop window for its first-time director, Quentin Tarantino. Abel Ferrara's hysterical *The Bad Lieutenant*, shown in the section 'Un Certain Regard', stars Harvey Keitel as a New York cop permanently stoned on confiscated dope, given to sexually assaulting young female traffic offenders, and suffering crises of Catholic guilt punctuated by visitations from Christ.

Thankfully, *The Player* offered more rational and satirical perceptions. Hollywood, says Robert Altman, "is an easily recognisable metaphor for our society. It's what we teach our kids to admire – what makes the most money. It's all just greed". *The Player* will go down in history as one of the best pictures about Hollywood, perfectly capturing the period, as well as the morality of our times. "It wasn't movies I was making fun of", says Altman, "it was the people who don't let them get made".

The Player's protagonist, Tim Robbins, appeared in Cannes as a kind of Wellesian polymath. On his film *Bob Roberts*, shown in the Directors' Fortnight, he features as director, writer and composer as well as singing star. Bob Roberts is a rich, successful and fascist folk-singer who runs for the Senate. Using an ingenious framing device of a British television documentary unit out to cover the election campaign, the movie takes a witty look at contemporary political archetypes.

It is not accidental that the title of Gianni Amelio's *Il ladro di bambini* (*Stolen Children*) recalls De Sica's *Ladri di biciclette*. The directness of narrative and sentiment, the use of non-actors and non-dramatic styles, the unpicturesque Italy seen on the road, look back without nostalgia to Neo-realism.



Fernando Solanas' *'El Viaje'*, laughter in the face of despair

'For this year's jury, led by Gérard Depardieu, to give the award to August's 'The Best Intentions' – ignoring Erice, Ivory, Davies and Altman – seemed wilfully erratic'

However, Amelio points out that if the style is similar, the spirit is far from the original Neo-realists: "The post-war Italians were conscious of the disaster and determined to overcome it. Today, a blind and indifferent Italy has abdicated, forgotten all public spirit". The story – the growing understanding between a rookie *carabiniere* and two children in care whom he is escorting to a home in Sicily – is simple and predictable, but surprisingly engaging.

For Fernando Solanas, "All Latin America is a disaster area". In *El Viaje*, he uses a young boy's quest for his father to explore the historical tragedies and current catastrophes of the continent. The style of strip-cartoon farce is new for Solanas, a kind of laughter in the face of despair. Disgust with our times reaches its highest pitch (in all senses) in Pavel Lungin's *Luna Park*, which confirms the opportunism and exhibitionism evident in *Taxi Blues*. Another Franco-Russian co-production, *Luna Park* imagines a very-near-future Moscow, in which a neo-fascist gang, The Cleaners, strives for restoration of the old law and order along with extermination of Jews. Lungin's efforts to emulate both Walter Hill and *A Clockwork Orange* are nothing if not ambitious.

Another Russian film in competition, Vitali Kanievski's *An Independent Life* (*Samostoitel'naya Zhizn*), continues the autobiographical reminiscences of *Freeze*, *Die*, *Come to Life*, which won the Cannes Camera d'Or in 1990. The young hero, roaming Eastern Russia after the Second World War, treks north in search of a new home. He matures fast in encounters with a world of harsh nature and human brutality. The grimness is unsparing, and Kanievski deliberately refuses even the solace of a recognisable narrative.

However, not all in Cannes was despair. Sometimes optimism came from the least likely themes. Abbas Kiarostami's *And Life Goes On* (*Zendege va Digar Hich*) describes a journey through the areas devastated by the 1990 Iranian earthquake. The two boy actors from his earlier film, *Where Is My Friend's House?* (*Khaneh-ye Doost Kojast*, 1989) disappeared without trace in the disaster. The film is quiet, lyrical and occasionally

comic. Kiarostami fails to find the children, but discovers the resilience and lust for life of the survivors.

Jonathan Demme's documentary *Cousin Bobby* is an optimistic antidote both to the US competition films and to his own *The Silence of the Lambs*. While feeling despondent about "the terrible destructive negative bent that America has been on", Demme chanced upon his long-lost cousin, the Reverend Robert Castle, a garrulous parish priest in Harlem, battling fearlessly and untiringly to get a better deal for the underdogs of New York. The film describes Demme's rediscovery of his older relative. "I look at him and feel that even the tiniest of victories is utterly beautiful, and if your presence has a positive effect on one person or a couple of people or a family or a neighbourhood for a day, or even for an hour, or even for a moment, it's a wonderful thing".

Almost any other festival jury would have given the Palme d'Or to Victor Erice's audacious *The Dream of Light* (*El Sol de Membrillo*): as it was, it merely shared the Special Jury Prize with Kanievski. (Even this was preferable to the consolation prize "in honour of the 45th Festival" with which James Ivory's accomplished *Howards End* was fobbed off.) Any description of Erice's enthralling film can only make it sound deadly. For two and a quarter hours, we watch a painter, Antonio Lopez, meticulously recording a quince tree on canvas. During the long process, the fruit burgeons, ripens and withers. Next year the work will begin again. Meantime, people come along, watch and chat and go. Against all probability, this minimalist study becomes progressively more intriguing, absorbing and amusing.

Erice cites Bazin's idea of representational art as "the ingrained need to conquer time through the perpetuity of forms, the desire to replace the external world with its double". Terence Davies' *The Long Day Closes* is essentially about the conquest and capture of time. The film progresses beyond *Distant Voices*, *Still Lives* in abandoning all pretence at narrative to offer a purely poetic collection of impressionistic reflexions and remembered moments.

There were other causes for celebration: Sven Nykvist's exquisite classical rural drama, *The Ox* (*Oxen*), a recollection of his own family since the great famine of 1868; and Vincent Ward's visions (though less his sentimental narrative) in *Map of the Human Heart*. Hal Hartley's *Simple Men* also had admirers, though this road movie about two brothers in search of their fugitive



'Cousin Bobby', Jonathan Demme's documentary



Gianni Amelio's 'Stolen Children', looking back to Neo-realism

father seemed to be playing on his flavour-of-the-month reputation. There is a sense here of killing time, with the highly coloured characters, whimsical relationships, arch second-hand dialogue and designer denim.

Perhaps the most cheering event of the festival was the Cinderella success story of *Strictly Ballroom*. Baz Luhrmann's film arrived from Australia unseen and unheralded. Within forty-eight hours, rights had been sold for practically every territory in the world except the US, from which the bids were so competitive that a fiercely contested auction ensued. The film is a model of popular comedy. A story of mythical dimensions is told with exemplary skill. The politics of a ballroom contest are the metaphor for repression and rebellion, generational disputes and self-discovery. *Strictly Ballroom* – developed in stages over six years from an original half-hour drama school production – is driven by a strong musical-balletic structure and unflagging verve.

As a member of the jury that gave Bille August's *Pelle the Conqueror* the Cannes Palme d'Or in 1988, I would still defend that much-criticised decision. For this year's jury, led by Gérard Depardieu, to give the award to August's *The Best Intentions* (*Den Goda Viljan*) – ignoring Erice, Ivory, Davies and Altman – seemed wilfully erratic. Ingmar Bergman's original script is fine. The intimate description of his own parents' frustrated courtship and difficult early married life could have made another *Fanny and Alexander*. The performances too are generally excellent, particularly Pernilla August (née Pernilla Ostergren, the maid in *Fanny and Alexander*) as the spoiled daughter of a rich family, shaping herself to life as the wife of a dedicated but unpopular priest in a benighted rural parish.

August, however, films the long and crucial dialogue scenes in irritatingly pedestrian style, and at best makes conventional use of the locations. Perhaps the process of reforming a six-hour television mini-series into a three-hour film resulted in the desiccation which characterises this decent, dull film. The ways of festival juries, though, are strange and unpredictable.

Ginette Vincendeau in Créteil

The fourteenth International Women's Film Festival at Créteil, in the suburbs of Paris, offered a formidable programme of over sixty features and eighty shorts. These were spread between films in competition and parallel tributes, to director Germaine Dulac, actress Bernadette Lafont and actresses turned directors (Monica Vitti, Brigitte Rouan and others), as well as a special focus on Europe. The abundance of material and the presence of many practitioners, from the illustrious Agnès Varda and Kira Muratova to the lesser known, make the relative obscurity of Créteil all the more regrettable.

Part of this neglect is due to the suspicion (or derision) with which anything associated with women or feminism is treated in France, and part to the lack of commercial impact that Créteil, despite its efforts, has on the French – and international – markets. Both aspects neatly converged in the release, during the festival, of Diane Kurys' *Après l'amour*.

Kurys, who has vowed never to set foot in Créteil, is given the same star treatment by the French media as any other major (male) director, while Créteil remains largely ignored. Even directors sensitive to the issue of women's cinema, such as Helma Sanders-Brahms (a regular visitor to the festival), keep their new releases for Cannes. And why not? Male directors are not subjected to this dilemma between commercial expediency and ideological loyalty.

Créteil being more a cinéphile than a trade event, its audience could catch up with a wide range of films, including Yannick Bellon's ecological melodrama *L'Affût* (1991), Varda's tribute to the late Jacques Demy, *Jacquot de Nantes* (1990), as well as Muratova's extraordinary version of Somerset Maugham's *The Letter*, *Peremena Outchasti* (1987). As usual, Muratova harnesses powerful personal melodrama and symbolism to political awareness – in this case the (ex-)Soviet Union's class and racial divisions. Another Russian film, Lydia Bobrova's *Oy, vi gousi* (1991), also successfully combines a portrait of the 'underbelly' of Russian society with family drama. Muratova and Bobrova owe their current visibility to *glasnost*, but their future in a Russian film industry now open to commercialism is uncertain. These issues were debated at Créteil in a two-day conference on film production in Europe.

This year's selection of films in competition reflected the ethos of Créteil in its preponderance of classic-realist auteur works and 'issue' films over experimental work or popular genre movies – though aesthetically more demanding films, like Julie Dash's *Daughters of the Dust* (1991) were included. The top prize went to Susanne Bier's *Freud Is Leaving Home* (Sweden, 1991), a well-made psychological drama about Jewish culture in Sweden and the trauma of the mother's death.

Bier's film has aesthetic and emotional appeal, but it lacks the emotional complexity and narrative economy of Gillian Arm-

strong's study of the disintegration of a family, *The Last Days of Chez Nous* (Australia, 1991), or the wit of Monika Treut's *My Father Is Coming* (Germany/US, 1991). As in her previous *Virgin Machine* (1988), Treut approaches cultural and sexual ambivalence through a mixture of home-movie realism, humour and kitsch.

But jury and audience responded most enthusiastically to the ethnographic approach of the Amber Newcastle-based collective. Their feature *Dream On* (UK, 1991), about working-class women in North Shields, won the audience prize and a mention from the jury, who clearly related to the heroines' resilience in the face of economic and cultural deprivation, barely relieved by the fantasies signalled by the title. The jury also rewarded Pratibha Parmar's short film on Asian lesbians, *Khush* (1991).

From a British perspective, the existence of a women's film event of the magnitude of Créteil, largely funded by public money, belongs to the realms of fantasy. In these circumstances, it seems churlish to point to its limitations, which derive from its ambition to be more than a showcase for films. The lack of theoretical input (in the discussions and documentation) was disappointing. For instance, the Dulac retrospective (unfortunately incomplete) did not draw on feminist critical work on this director. And one would have hoped for more awareness of gender representation in the section on Lafont – a star whose career went from overt sexual display (Truffaut's *Les Mistons*, 1957) to Jill Godmilow's film on Gertrude Stein, *Waiting for the Moon* (1986). Still, spectators were at least given the chance to reflect on such issues, for instance in the rarely shown version of Christiane Rochefort's 60s feminist novel, *Les Stances à Sophie* (director Moshe Mizrahi, 1971), in which Lafont and Bulle Ogier hilariously pose as vapid bourgeois housewives and puncture French macho stereotypes.

This year's festival also featured a large retrospective of French shorts, still the training ground for feature directors. Most were technically accomplished, many were inventive and some were feminist. Combining all these qualities was Claire Simon's *Scènes de ménage* (1991), a series of ten four-minute films made for Canal Plus. In each episode, Miou-Miou fantasises on the soundtrack ("I'm going to kill my husband", "I'm going to leave") while the image shows her engaged in cleaning the oven, hoovering and so on. By making visually inventive work for television, Simon and others show a willingness to engage with the new audiovisual economy at a time when the changing status of the image is on the agenda of both theoretical debates and the economics of leisure and media in Europe.

Créteil 1992 coincided with the opening of Euro Disneyland, the passing of the La Cinq channel and the beginning of the new Franco-German cultural channel Arte, allowing the festival to take a topical look at women's contribution to these fast-changing patterns and their exploration of current shifts in national identity.

'From a British perspective, the existence of a women's film event of the magnitude of Créteil, largely funded by public money, belongs to the realms of fantasy'

Buying times

Ashish Rajadhyaksha

Indian cinema hasn't found it easy to maintain its pre-eminent position as the world's largest manufacturer of films. But it did in the past weather its crises well – as, for example, when it overcame its virtual loss of the foreign distribution market to video piracy in the 80s by means of a well-co-ordinated campaign to convert the video into an accountable and cash-rich territory. The first indication that the problems Indian cinema now faces could be in a different league came in January 1991, six months before the government's new economic policies were launched. In that month alone, prices of film rawstock went through the roof, hiked up by between 40 and 50 per cent.

The reason the problem was special, and part of something larger, became evident once GATT-sponsored conditions on what it called 'Trade-related Intellectual Property Rights' (TRIPS) became known. Dealing mainly with the patents law, some of the fine print also defined intellectual property as "improved access to motion pictures". In July 1991, the Indian government went in for a high-conditionality loan from the International Monetary Fund. Since then, it has announced a 20 per cent devaluation of the rupee and has deregulated import of raw negative film and the import and export of processed film as one of its concessions to American pressure under their Special 301 clause of the 1988 US Trade and Competitiveness Act.

Difficult days

The combination of the devalued rupee and the opening up of film-related markets is having lethal consequences. For one, on the National Film Development Corporation (NFDC), which launched the New Indian Cinema with Mani Kaul's *Uski Roti* and Mrinal Sen's *Bhuvan Shome* (both 1969). Since the early 80s, the NFDC has been the sole canalising agent for raw negative and processed film. Now it has suddenly lost its canalisation fee (under current exchange rates, approximately £300,000 annually).

This loss, which has already led to redundancy for 20 per cent of the NFDC's workforce, coupled with what is effectively a government ultimatum to raise its own funds if it wants to survive, has meant difficult days for this state-owned autonomous body. Although it has strongly denied rumours that it is about to close, it is well known that no new productions have been sanctioned recently.

The problem is, however, deeper than merely the future of the NFDC. This canalisation process had been what had allowed the Indian government to hold Jack Valenti's MPEAA at bay in 1984, when Valenti – denied the right to full repatriation of the box office earnings of US films in India – declared an American boycott of the Indian market. Along with maintaining stable rawstock prices in the face of the threat, the NFDC was also using the relatively mild canalisation tax to fund an independent cinema movement. Now, under laws that

completely reverse the relationship, companies like Kodak are to market their negative film using the partial rupee convertibility scheme, which means that Indian film producers will have to buy negative stock at rates that could be considerably higher than Kodak's or Fuji's commercial prices abroad, so using a considerably larger portion (approximately 35 per cent) of their budget to pay for imported raw materials than is generally the case in Western film budgets. Working in tandem with the unrestricted entry of foreign films into India and the only marginally restricted (\$6.1 million annually) authority to repatriate their earnings in the Indian market, this hike effectively means – given the extremely unequal principles of currency conversion – that Indian cinema will more or less be expected to subsidise Hollywood.

So far, the deregulation on negative stock has not extended to film positives, which are supplied to the entire industry in India by the government-owned Hindustan Photo Films (HPF), who import and perforate mainly Geva stock. However, the India Photographic Company, Kodak's local pseudonym, has apparently expressed some interest in starting its own perforation unit, which, if it happens, can only mean the closure of HPF. At the time of writing, jumbo positives are in very short supply because HPF is starving the market in anticipation, it would seem, of yet another price hike.

Such pressure on the film industry to raise extra resources is manifesting itself in cutbacks at virtually every level in the production and distribution process. None of this is government regulated, but it is determined by the stabilisation/restructuring/globalisation mantra that all official economic policy today chants in the name of the free market.

For instance, film laboratories are closing down. Right now in Bombay two major labs, Navrang and Bombay Cine, have declared closure, while Famous Cine, Mahalakshmi, is on the verge of following suit. Part of the problem is linked to their growing technological obsolescence – especially the old Debie step-printers and colour analysers – and part to the video industry. But a substantial reason for the decline is the cutback on the average number of prints made of a film, which in the Hindi industry has declined from around 200 for an average commercial release before 1985, to around eighty today. The closure of a laboratory means the loss of several hundred unclaimed film negatives; in the case of Famous, this includes films from the 40s. Both *Maya Darpan* (1972) and *Tarang* (1984), representing fifteen years of the work of India's most significant independent filmmaker, Kumar Shahani, are lying in labs that have declared closure and, at the time of writing, nothing concrete has been done to save them.

Early in May, the government of Maharashtra gave official sanction to cinema theatres to convert 40 per cent of their premises into shopping arcades and offices. This has led to protests by the Film Makers Combine, which complained that it was



Kumar Shahani's *'Maya Darpan'*, prints of which are currently under threat

high time the government did something to help the film industry, like reducing its iniquitous entertainment tax of 50 per cent on the price of the printed ticket.

Selling out

The situation in film is being replicated even more blatantly with television. Doordarshan, the state-owned Indian television, was established through the 80s following a four-decade investment in satellite technology that yielded the INSAT series, making India one of the few Third World countries to have an independent satellite programme. In the Seventh Five Year Economic Plan, an estimated £200 million was spent to make television accessible to 70 per cent of the population. In October 1991, the Hong Kong-based Hutchvision group, leasing cable time under the STAR TV banner, started telecasting to India and, in six months, has built a dish-antenna audience of approximately 6 million viewers; the figure by their estimate is likely to double by the end of the year. Hutchvision has recently signed up with Asia Today, a company floated by two Hong Kong-based Indian businessmen, to start a twenty-four-hour Hindi channel by August. They are already approaching Indian film industry producers and television serial-makers. Some of India's major television advertisers, like the Madras-based MRF Tyres, have already switched their advertising to STAR.

Faced with this threat, Doordarshan has done the only thing the Indian government appears capable of doing: it has announced a sale of its regional second channels throughout the country. The question of who will account for all that Seventh Plan money spent on building a nationwide infrastructure of television sets, now most useful for STAR, CNN and MTV-Asia, with the London-based ATN waiting in the wings, remains to be asked.

Meanwhile, the Indian film industry might well greet the centenary of cinema with its famed independence leased to foreign cable networks, its history confined only to the national film archive's vaults.

'Early in May, the government of Maharashtra gave official sanction to cinema theatres to convert 40 per cent of their premises into shopping arcades and offices'

Colonists and pirates

Peter Dean

Until the Indian government started to legislate against piracy, video was killing the cinema star. In the UK, this has already happened: the Indian-language cinemas that proliferated in the mid to late 70s have all but disappeared, with only twenty of the most popular films getting big-screen exposure each year. This year's number one film, *Khuda Gawah*, for example, played at London's Hammersmith and Marble Arch Odeons and a dozen other screens on a show-by-show basis, simultaneously with the film's video release.

It is primarily the films made in Hindi which make it over to the UK, with Punjabi films a close second followed by Tamil and other ethnic-language films. Ninety-nine per cent are without subtitles, and the odd ones that do have them are usually subtitled in another Indian language – rarely English. Of the large number of films produced in India each year, only 150 get exposure in the UK through 750 specialist video shops, dotted throughout the larger Indian, Pakistani and Bangladeshi communities. Like the six distributors, the stores are Indian-owned and in the hands of their particular community. But because of cultural and financial restraints on the video industry which have stunted growth over the past few years, Indian video gets a raw deal from the UK.

Colonial overtones

Take censorship, for example. Nudity is not allowed in Indian production; the censorship is strict and by the time the films are imported on 35mm print or U-Matic tape, they have been classified by India's Central Board of Film Classification and are deemed ready for consumption. The British Board of Film Classification then charges approximately £750 for a UK certificate, which is often at odds with what the Indian censorship board deems suitable.

The same process applies to American films, the difference being that those in Hindi are going to be seen by a particular audience attuned to the films' conventions. BBFC senior examiner Guy Phelps admits there are different criteria that sometimes apply to Indian-language film: "The style of the films is so different, especially in the way violence is presented, the audience's expectations are also different... It's very difficult to know – are we classifying by purely English standards or for the Indian community living in England?" There is an argument that the BBFC shouldn't become involved at all, as the Indian censorship board knows better what an Indian audience is able to accept without offence. Video dealers like Mr Sanhawalia at Saroop Enterprises are at a loss to explain this secondary censorship. "The whole family sees these films in India", he says, pointing at the large numbers of 15 and 18-rated films on his shelves. There is a world of difference between English- and Indian-language videos, and there's no denying the colonial overtones to the BBFC in Soho Square deciding what Indian audiences

should and should not be able to see of their films in this country.

Distributors here say it's just a way of making money. One calls the BBFC a "rip-off", another says: "It's all a money-making exercise. The censorship board in India is very, very strict and these films are already cut when we import them".

The problem areas, according to the BBFC, are cruelty to animals (mongoose fights with snakes are common symbolic scenes) and violence in general. Violence against women is also a cause for concern: although there is no nudity, and the violence is largely symbolic (often as suggestive as the tugging of a sari), sequences that imply some kind of violation, however mild, appear quite often.

While conventions about what can be shown on screen are very settled, the Indian-speaking audience can get their fill of gossip from India's many film gossip magazines. The cover lines on the March issue of *Cineblitz International* – best-selling of these – proclaim "I am not a Virgin!... 'I Admit Mine is Small! – Macho Studs' Bedroom Confessions!... 'My Lesbian Encounter – Anu Agarwal's Scandal Bared!' Inside, one finds reams of gossip about the stars' sex and drugs intake that nearly always begins with the confidential 'Darlings!'"

Indian film still operates largely around the dictates of the star system. The most popular actors may well be working on six films at a time and may be participating in three different productions during the same day. "Amitabh Bacchan, the highest-paid actor in India's history, is worshipped like a god – as an extension of Hinduism", says actor Saeed Jaffrey. "Video hasn't diminished this either. When they come here to Wembley or Madison Square Gardens they sell out, do film numbers with a full orchestra and are accompanied on stage by elephants and so on. It's common for a leading man to appear on a white charger – it's all very 30s Hollywood".

The most popular actors in India today are Bacchan, Anil Kapoor and Salman Khan, with many young rising stars also adopting the surname Khan. "We're currently in the reign of the Khans – Muslim boys who've changed to a Hindi name so as to progress further", explains Jaffrey. Leading actresses include Sri Devi and Madhuri Dixit. Two directors who've risen to prominence over the past five years are Subhash Ghai and Yash Chopra, who alternate between two of India's primary genres – the action thriller and the musical romance.

But if the scope and style of the films seems grand, the financial restraints in the UK video industry are pure 90s recession. With a dip in video rentals generally, even the Hollywood majors are finding it difficult to make ends meet. The C, and to some extent B-title market has been severely hit by diminishing returns, with Warner Home Video laying off a third of its staff six months ago. And yet on a popular title, it can still sell 40-50,000 copies at £45-50.

A popular Indian title, however, will sell just 1,000-2,500 copies at an average trade

'In the next few years Asian television is coming on... on Sky, TV Asia is looking to launch in June and Sunrise is looking to launch as well. Video will be hit in a big way'

price of £26, and that's without the financial muscle and vertically integrated structure (from production through to ancillary rights sales) necessary for a distributor to control the product and maintain a safe distance from predatory media. There is no growing sell-through market, as for Western films – rather, video shops will buy tapes in packs of three (£60) or ten (£150) and sell them on to fans after the title has ended its rental life.

Video piracy

Video piracy is another financial problem. Where piracy accounts for some 30 per cent of the legitimate English-language video market, piracy of Indian-language films is ten times bigger than legitimate business. Unlike Western films, this is primarily conducted here in the UK through backtracking, rather than through imports or more sophisticated methods – copying straight from the master, for example. Translated to street level, that means the most popular title will have done the rounds in two weeks, leaving the legitimate store owner holding a copy which may not have made its money back. The inevitable price-cutting war ensues, with some shops going as low as a rental charge of 30p a night to attract customers and put the shop next door out of business.

According to Reg Dixon, head of the anti-piracy policing body Federation Against Copyright Theft, one of the reasons behind the disparity in piracy rates is that officers find it difficult to distinguish between real and counterfeit tapes because of the language 'problem'. Another is that proving copyright theft outside the UK and US is difficult in court. "It's very difficult for a breach in copyright to be proved, especially when an Indian producer sells rights to more than one company", says Dixon.

Back catalogue, one of the chief sources of revenue to the video dealer, has also been severely hit by Indian films screened on the Utsat satellite and London-based cable operations. Most dealers contacted in the course of writing this article saw cable and television as the most threatening cloud on the horizon and are trying to compensate for lost library revenue by selling soundtrack cassettes and other add-ons like blank tapes and accessories. "Business is down and cable is affecting it to the largest extent", says Rajesh Mehra. "In the next few years, Asian television is coming on... on Sky, TV Asia is looking to launch in June and Sunrise is looking to launch as well. Video will be hit in a big way".

Survival for an Indian licensor and video shop looks bleak in this high cost/low margin business. Video could well be losing its place as the main carrier of Indian-language films – and soon may be seen historically as merely serving as a stepping stone from big to small screen through the 70s to 90s. If current market trends continue, the latest Indian cinema hits will be reaching their audience directly through satellite and cable, leaving the Indian-language video industry without the commercial impetus to survive.

INVADING BODIES

Aliens³ and the trilogy by Amy Taubin



BOLE KONOL

● Situated in a mineral ore refinery and toxic waste dump-cum-maximum security prison on a planet at the “rats ass end of space”, *Alien*¹, directed by David Fincher, mines an unconscious structured by 100 years of cinema. It doesn't make allusions or tributes, neither is it a knock-off or a rip-off. It is, however, suffused with a particularly bleak and claustrophobic strain of imagery. It's every prison, shiphold, sewer, grave robbing, guillotine, morgue, concentration camp, New York subway, lunatic asylum movie you've ever seen. It's *Escape from Devil's Island* and *Island of Lost Souls*; *The Third Man*, *The Trial*, *Othello* and (via Welles) *Apocalypse Now*; *Day of Wrath*, *Vampire*, *Joan of Arc* and (via Dreyer) *The Seventh Seal*; *Dune* and *The Shining*, *Bridge on the River Kwai* and you name it. It's whatever images surface on your dream screen when what's really terrifying you is Aids, or being pregnant with a monster, or being forced to carry a foetus you don't want to term, or never being able to have a baby though you desperately want one because this is the end of the industrial age which is also the age of the movies, the end of pleasure and unpleasure, the end of the world as we know it.

Time stops dead at the “rats ass end of space”. If there's a future, *Alien*² can't imagine it. In that sense, it's the opposite of *T2*, another end of the steel-age flick. *T2* sends the mixed message required of blockbusters: on the one hand, it says if you think what's gone down until now is bad (and that includes *Terminator* circa 1985), what comes next – *T2* – is worse; on the other hand, the morphing of *T2* is the biggest seduction in the movie.

In skeleton, *Alien* and *Aliens* are, respectively, a slasher flick and a war epic. *Alien*³ treats these fossilised genres with blatant disrespect. Privileging the inchoate, it veers from the Hollywood straight and narrow towards what, for lack of a better term, is still referred to as avant-garde film.

Regarding the mysterious death of the protagonist of *Mesher of the Afternoon*, Maya Deren (its film-maker/actor, aka the mother of the American avant-garde) wrote: “it would seem that the imagined achieved for her such force that it became a reality”. There is evidence to suggest that *Alien*³ is, in its entirety, Ripley's nightmare – in the sense that *Mesher* was Deren's – a nightmare from which she never awakes. This is not merely to say that *Alien*³ traffics in the fantastic; as sci-fi it obviously does. Rather, that the structure of this \$50 million mega-sequel often seems like a secondary elaboration (in the Freudian dream work sense), a jagged and digressive cover to the anxiety churning beneath.

Released in 1979, Ridley Scott's *Alien* played on anxieties set loose by a decade of feminist and gay activism. Looking for a warm host for their eggs, the aliens didn't bother about the niceties of sexual difference. When the baby alien (or as one 42nd Street moviehouse denizen exclaimed, “little-dick-with-teeth”) burst from John Hurt's chest, it cancelled the distinction on which human culture is based.

Prehistoric in appearance, the alien embodied the return of repressed infantile fears and confusions about where babies come from and the anatomical differences between the sexes. Its toothy, dripping mouth was hermaphroditic:

while the double jaws represented the inner and outer labia of the vagina dentata, the projectile movement of the inner jaw was a phallic threat. Granted that the terror of being raped and devoured by the monster loomed large for both sexes, *Alien* was a basically male anxiety fantasy: that a man could be impregnated was the ultimate outrage. But by making the heroine a woman, however tomboyish, gender as well as sexual difference was destabilised.

A Pentagon-inspired family-values picture for the Reagan 80s, James Cameron's *Aliens* (1986) is the most kinetically exciting and politically conservative film of the series. A marine squadron does hand-to-claw combat with an alien army that has destroyed the inhabitants of a planetary outpost. New Age assault rifles and grenade launchers are fetishised, as is the nuclear family. “Families”, breathes Ripley in horror when she learns the identity of the victims.

During the fifty-seven year ellipsis between *Alien* and *Aliens*, Ripley, deep in hyperspace with Jonesy the cat wrapped in her arms, drifted about in a time-warp. In *Aliens*, Ripley's nurturing impulses are redirected from the cat to the girl child, Newt, the sole survivor of the alien attack. The recently released (on videotape in Britain, on laser-disc in the US) director's cut of *Aliens* restores twenty minutes that were hacked from the theatrical version. Included is a moment in which the newly rescued Ripley breaks down when she's shown a photograph of an old woman – it's her daughter, who died at age seventy-six.

The scene reinforces Cameron's preoccupation with back-to-the-future twists and tough mothers (Linda Hamilton in the *Terminator* films is a dumber, male-identified version of Ripley) but, in terms of Ripley's character, the trilogy works better when Ripley's maternal desire develops gradually on screen rather than being realised in the back story. In the first film, she's the career woman whose nurturing impulses are invested in her cat. In the second, she becomes the adoptive mother of Newt. In the third, having lost Newt, and with her biological clock running out, she discovers she's pregnant – with an alien. It's a betrayal of and by the body that many women of Ripley's generation (give or take a couple of centuries) understand too well.

Cameron's *Aliens* re-establishes sexual difference in both the human and alien spheres. Although the dialogue implies that the aliens are as indiscriminate as ever in their choice of

Body snatcher: Sigourney Weaver and her 'twin', the alien who wants to possess her, below; the alien, hardly glimpsed in the original 'Alien', is now a massing landscape in 'Alien³', left



hosts, on screen it's a female human who suffers the involuntary Caesarian birth. Similarly, it's the alien queen who, guarded by her warriors, lays the eggs.

Like *Alien*, *Aliens* climaxes with a one-on-one between Ripley and the alien. In the second film, however, the scene is structured as a cat fight between the good mother and the bad. (As in *Fatal Attraction*, or the more recent *The Hand that Rocks the Cradle*, the good mother is forced to defend her family against a crazy woman who invades her household and tries to usurp her position.)

However thrilling the entrance of Ripley in the power loader (she's transformed into a cyborg), the image is immediately tarnished by the obviousness of her line, “Get away from her, you bitch”, addressed to the alien who's about to do something terrible to the cowering Newt. The misogyny of the scene has often been analysed on a psychosexual level as the refusal of the ‘monstrous feminine’, of the archaic, devouring, mother. But it also has a historically specific, political meaning. If Ripley is the prototypical, upper-middle-class WASP, the alien queen bears a suspicious resemblance to a favourite scapegoat of the Reagan/Bush era – the black welfare mother, that parasite on the economy whose uncurbed reproductive drive reduced hard-working taxpayers to bankruptcy.

“The bitch is back” is the tag line of the trailer for *Alien*³. Intoned above a two shot of the alien pressing its drooling lips against Ripley's quivering cheek, it could refer to either of them, or both. Six years after *Aliens*, bitch is a fundamental term in rap culture and it's the rap audience the trailer is addressing. No matter that it's out of sync with the elegaic tone of the film. No matter that viewers who expected a replay of Cameron's militaristic vision are bound to be disappointed. *Alien*³ took a cool \$27 million in its opening week, after which the box office dropped precipitously. The mainstream press was largely dismissive. As I write, two weeks after the US release, no one has written about *Alien*³ in either the gay or feminist press, despite the fact that the film is all about the Aids crisis and the threat to women's reproductive rights.

*Alien*³ picks up where *Aliens* leaves off, just after Ripley tucks her putative nuclear family – Newt, the husbandly Hicks, and the crippled android-nanny Bishop into their hyper-sleep pods before settling herself for the long night ahead. “Can I dream?”, asks Newt. “I think we both can all the way home”, Ripley assures her, as she, too, snuggles down.

Their dreams are anything but sweet. The shards of imagery that punctuate the opening credits of *Alien*³ reveal that something is moving about the space craft, trying to crack open the sleep pods, starting fires. Ripley stirs in her sleep, but Newt and Hicks are oblivious and they are both DOA when the space craft crash lands on Fury 161. Ripley is alone – the sole woman in a prison labour camp with twenty-five YY chromosome lifers. In *Alien*³, the disgruntled workers of earlier films have become slaves of the military corporate state (The Company).

Although Ripley is the protagonist of *Alien* and *Aliens*, their narratives are not a function of her point of view. Often she seems as alien- ▶

◀ ated (indeed!) from the story that's constructed around her as she is from her co-workers, or from The Company itself. *Alien*³ is much more a first-person film (and one should not underestimate Sigourney Weaver's contribution to its authorship). The film charts Ripley's emotional course from despair to beyond despair to a brief moment of rebirth (in community) to a death that's no less bitter for all its principled defiance.

Former murderers, rapists and child molesters, the prisoners on Fury 161 practise an "apocalyptic millenarian, fundamentalist Christianity" of their own devising. "We've taken a vow of celibacy and that also includes women", one of them sneeringly tells Ripley. Their leader Dillon (Charles Dutton) is worried that Ripley's presence will cause "a break in the spiritual unity" of his men. In their eyes, she's the alien.

Inadvertently, Ripley has brought two of the deadly creatures with her. One soon erupts from the belly of a pet dog and the other, "a queen, an egg-layer", is growing inside Ripley herself. Ripley must persuade Dillon and his crew ("the YY chromo boys") to join forces with her to destroy the aliens, to sacrifice themselves to save humanity. Because, as usual, The Company wants an alien prototype brought back to earth "for use in its biological warfare division". In the language of US constitutional law, it has "a compelling state interest" in the foetus Ripley is carrying. (In other words, no abortion rights for her.)

Unlike sci-fi creatures of the cold war period, who took possession of souls and minds – even when they were called body snatchers – the alien is an invader and destroyer of the body. (Ironically, decapitation is a favourite trick of this latest model.) In *Alien*³, the body, which in retrospect seems to have been remarkably repressed in the first two films, becomes a landscape, obsessively probed and examined with fingers and eyes, penetrated in close-up with needles, knives and saws.

Early in the film, Ripley forms a blood bond with Clemons, the prison doctor (Charles Dance). He's a man with a tainted past: high on

morphine, he once overdosed and killed a dozen or so of his patients. She's tainted too; although she doesn't realise it, she has an alien growing inside her. Clemons is off drugs now, but he still fetishises the ritual, as does *Alien*³'s director. Ripley and Clemons have perfunctory, mostly off-screen, sex, but the truly erotic moments between them involve him shooting her up, not once but twice, in the space of fifteen minutes, "with his own special cocktail". "Do you trust me?", he asks, as Ripley stretches her opalescent-skinned arm across the screen. The sequences are achingly attenuated; each is about ten shots long. At the end of the second, the alien looms suddenly behind the translucent examining-room curtain and lops off Clemons' head.

Aids is everywhere in the film. It's in the danger surrounding sex and drugs. It's in the metaphor of a mysterious deadly organism attacking an all-male community. It's in the iconography of the shaven heads. Exhorting the prisoners to defy The Company, Ripley shouts, "They think we're scum and they don't give a fuck about one friend of yours who's died", an Aids activism line if ever there was one.

The alien's basement lair, with its dripping pipes and sewage tunnels, represents not only the fear of the monstrous-feminine, but homophobia as well. It's the uterine and the anal plumbing entwined. Which is why the alliance between Ripley and Dillon (the 'feminist' and the 'homosexual') is so moving.

More a possession film than its predecessors, *Alien*³ has a schizoid look that's both claustrophobic and fluid. Fincher's predilection for extreme low angles emphasises the oppressively massive scale of the combination prison/hospital/blast furnace (Foucault in the twenty-sixth century) set. His refusal (whether intentional or not) of the conventions of continuity editing (most of the film is shot in close-up; what long shots there are could hardly be considered 'establishing') results in a space that's all the more confining for being without discernible boundaries.

The boundary that's most in question is

between Ripley and the alien. "You've been in my life for so long, I can't remember anything else", she whispers. "Don't be afraid, I'm one of the family now". It's something more than her new haircut that suddenly makes Ripley's teeth the focus of attention, like the sharp little teeth of the possessed sister in *Vampyr*. The alien queen is inside Ripley, who's the mother in us all. It's the only baby she'll ever have.

Released twelve years after he directed *Alien*, Ridley Scott's *Thelma & Louise* prefigures the new *Alien*. By choosing to hurl herself over the brink rather than bend to the will of the state, the hero guarantees her transformation from woman to myth. More pessimistic and unsparing than *Thelma & Louise*, Fincher's *Alien*³ suggests that Ripley knows that the odds are against there being anyone left in the world for whom her myth will have meaning.

Dillon is already dead when the representatives of The Company finally arrive. They try to trick Ripley into letting them have the alien foetus, into allowing them to take control: "You could have a life, a child... trust us". It's the Jeanne D'Arc scene. It's also the climax of the allegory that *Alien*³, like most blockbuster movies, has embedded within it – the allegory of its own making. When asked how Fincher, whose first feature this is, convinced Twentieth Century Fox to allow him such a grim ending, one Hollywood writer explained that "having gotten the studio 90 per cent pregnant, it had no choice but to let him go all the way".

All the way is Ripley, executing a backward swan dive into a fiery furnace. The sequence is strikingly similar to the earlier ones with the needle – the same sense of body stretched over space and time, the same fetishised close-ups, the same ecstatic abandonment to the inevitable. As she falls, the alien bursts out of her. She wraps her arms around it, pressing its hissing mouth to her breast – to prevent its escape, but also, to nurture it. A most complicated gesture, and quite unlike any other that I've ever seen in movies.

R.I.P. Ripley

ALIEN EVOLUTION



1: Georges Méliès' 'Le Voyage dans la lune' (1902)
2: 'Aelita' (1924)
3: 'Flash Gordon' (1938)
4: 'The Man from Planet X' (1951)

THE GOOD THE BAD AND THE UGLY

What is the changing shape of the cinema's alien, asks Kevin Jackson?

● In the beginning was the lobster. When Georges Méliès set about populating the earth's satellite for his and the cinema's pioneering excursion into space, *Le Voyage dans la lune* (1902), he did so by dressing up some Folies Bergère acrobats in oversized pseudo-crustacean outfits, complete with claw-hands, dorsal spines and giant webbed feet. They toted spears as sharp as the punky spikes on their heads, and behaved in all kinds of threatening ways before disappearing in puffs of smoke.

Yet rather than dangerous predators, Méliès' original drawings for the Selenites suggest somewhat jaunty, whimsical beasts with – important detail – large black eyes. (The present-day designer Van Ling, who worked on the creatures in James Cameron's *The Abyss*, 1989, has suggested a useful rule of thumb for close encounters: when the visitor is friendly, as in *E.T. The Extra-terrestrial*, 1982, or *Mac and Me*, 1988, the eyes are large and childlike and the mouth small. Reverse the formula and you have the blindly murderous xenomorphs of the *Alien* series.) One of the Selenites even hunkers down on the moon's surface as if waiting for someone to throw it a ball. It adds up to a richly suggestive image, and a shrewd critic might even have been able to make a number of accurate extrapolations from the sketch – not just to the nasty invading arthropods of the 50s, but also to the cuddlier interplanetary arrivals of the 80s.

While it would be too much to claim that the

history of alien appearances is no more than a series of footnotes to Méliès, it is certainly the case that his Selenites established one convention which has survived into the era of animatronics. The vast majority of aliens are still (approximately) humanoid bipeds with special features adapted from elsewhere in the food chain – more bluntly, guys in funny suits. Even Ridley Scott's original high-budget killer in *Alien* (1979) adhered to the principle. Close-ups of that terrible drooling mouth (inspired by one of the furies from Francis Bacon's *Three Studies for Figures at the Base of a Crucifixion*, 1944) were the mechanical work of Carlo Rambaldi, from designs by H. R. Giger, but for the shots which required a full view of the creature's body, the tall Nigerian actor Bolaji Badejo wore the body armour.

Consider, too, that Méliès took his scenario from H. G. Wells and Jules Verne, and his Selenites specifically from Wells' *First Men in the Moon*. Bright schoolchildren know that Wells was deeply affected by evolutionary theories, and that his fiction bears witness to this. Perhaps the most famous sentence in science fiction, from *The War of the Worlds*, thrills with the melodrama of Darwinian competition on a cosmic scale: "Across the gulf of space, minds that are to our minds as ours are to most of the beasts that perish, intellects vast and cool and unsympathetic, regarded this earth with envious eyes, and slowly and surely drew their plans against us".

Bright undergraduates might be able to add that it was only in the latter part of the nineteenth century that, in direct response to evolutionary debates, aliens began to flock through speculative fictions such as Camille Flammarion's *Lumen* (1897) and J. H. Rosny Aine's *Les Xipehuz* (1887), which postulates a mineral life form. What conclusions could a latter-day student of evolution formulate about the development of the movie alien from those primal moon lobsters?

The first would be that the species virtually died out as soon as it was born or hatched. Between 1902 and 1950, science fiction films were given over more to the miracles or threats

of technology. With the exception of oddities such as the Soviet production *Aelita* (1924), or chapter plays such as the *Flash Gordon* series (1938), science fiction films were largely alien-free, and the creatures had to slither or crawl through the pages of pulps and novels instead. Virtually as soon as the 50s began, however, the skies became thick with visitors: *The Man from Planet X* (1951), *The Day the Earth Stood Still* (1951), *The Thing from Another World* (1951), *Cat Women of the Moon* (1953), *Invaders from Mars* (1953), *It Came from Outer Space* (1953), *Robot Monster* (1953), *War of the Worlds* (1953), *This Island Earth* (1955)...

Take a step or two back, and some clear physical patterns emerge. One common alien genus is made up of those who look Just Like Us. This family falls into two broad classes: those who simply happen to take human form, and those who are faking it. Among the first are Klaatu (Michael Rennie), Christ-like visitor of *The Day the Earth Stood Still*; the various avatars of that other Christ-like extra-terrestrial, Clark Kent, in the *Superman* films; the busty natives of many all-female worlds, as ogled in *Queen of Outer Space* (1958) and spoofed by John Landis in *Amazon Women on the Moon* (1987); and the clean-cut warriors who took on the Evil Empire long ago in a galaxy far, far away.

The other group of pseudo-earthlings is both more various and more devious. While cultural critics might be inclined to equate all such replicas under the same (now over-familiar) ideological headings, there are nonetheless clear distinctions of morphology to be drawn between, for example, the fakes which hatch from giant pods as in *Invasion of the Body Snatchers* and those which simply borrow human form for a while, as in *It Came from Outer Space*. In recent years, too, exobiologists might note the development of the convention whereby – in a neat reversal of the man-in-a-suit gimmick – a smooth, ectomorphic alien body is concealed inside a bogus *homo sapiens* hide, as in *The Man Who Fell to Earth* (1976) and *Cocoon* (1985). The final sub-species of this genus is made up of ►

RONALD GRANT (5) / NATIONAL FILM ARCHIVE (6)



5: 'The Day the Earth Stood Still' (1951)
6: 'War of the Worlds' (1953)
7: 'Invaders from Mars' (1953)
8: 'Robot Monster' (1953)
9: 'This Island Earth' (1955)
10: 'It Conquered the World' (1956)



◀ seemingly human aliens whose bodies are in fact infinitely adaptable for purposes of good (John Carpenter's *Starman*, 1984), or ill (his remake of *The Thing*, 1982). In each case, the spectacle of a being who is identical to ourselves in every particular, yet alarmingly or delightfully Other gives focus to one of the perennial themes of science fiction: what is it that defines us as human? Even the most slapdash B-movies scrape against this puzzle, though, curiously, the film which confronts it most directly, *Blade Runner* (1982), employs not extra-terrestrials, but a set of 'man-made' aliens, the replicants.

There are plenty of other human lookalikes around – one of the best is John Sayles' *The Brother from Another Planet* (1985) – but when it comes to the guys in funny suits, sub-species begin to swarm beyond ready enumeration. Once in a rare while, they borrow from the mineral world, like the Rockmen in *Flash Gordon*. Slightly more often, they have vegetable tendencies, like the 'intelligent carrot' in *The Thing from Another World*, or the fanged Venusian cucumber of Roger Corman's *It Conquered the World* (1956), in reference to which the director made the enlightening comment that "a central axiom of science fiction film is that the monster should always be bigger than the leading lady".

Most sub-species, though, take their key design features from the animal kingdom, and from our own biological bigotries. This means not too many feathered aliens (and those mostly comic, like the hero of *Howard the Duck*, 1986) and only a few furry ones, mostly lovable like Chewbacca the Wookiee in *Star Wars* (1977), who also owes something to the Cowardly Lion of *Wizard of Oz*. Exceptions to the rule: the ape-like *Robot Monster*, the little Tribbles who caused Kirk so much trouble in one *Star Trek* episode, the feisty Critters (1986), and perhaps some of the more aggressive masters of the *Planet of the Apes* (1968), who turned out to be earthlings anyway.

Which leaves us with the scales, the tentacles and the exoskeletons; since your quintessential alien is either reptilian or, as Vasquez, the female marine in James Cameron's *Aliens* sneers in dis-

gust, a "bug". (Incidentally, BEM, or Bug-Eyed Monster, was once considered a workable synonym for the xenomorph, but few aliens apart from the extinct, locust-like Martians in *Quatermass and the Pit*, 1967, are noticeably insectoid in the eye department.) One of the earliest manifestations of tentacles, coiling out from a disembodied head, is in *Invaders From Mars*; and that head has the same hypertrophied cranial structure echoed in the Metalunans of *This Island Earth* (1955), down to the likes of *Alien Nation* (1988). Real reptiles and insects seldom, of course, have disproportionately large heads; the crude physical assumption and metaphors at work in these films scarcely require comment.

Despite the bold voyages of the Starship Enterprise, space became somewhat less densely populated in the decade during which space travel became a reality, and most of the screen aliens who survived these lean years continued to fall into classic, nature-plagiarising types. Then injections of large sums of money into effects budgets began to loosen the old categories. Whatever may be said against the *Star Wars* series, it was at least imaginative enough to acknowledge the possibility of a galaxy filled not just with one, but many different competing forms of intelligent life; and expensive enough to put Frank Oz and other animators to work on the likes of Yoda (that pint-size parody of Alec Guinness with the beautifully expressive ears) and Jabba the Hut (a vast and quivering mass of gluttony straight out of Hieronymus Bosch).

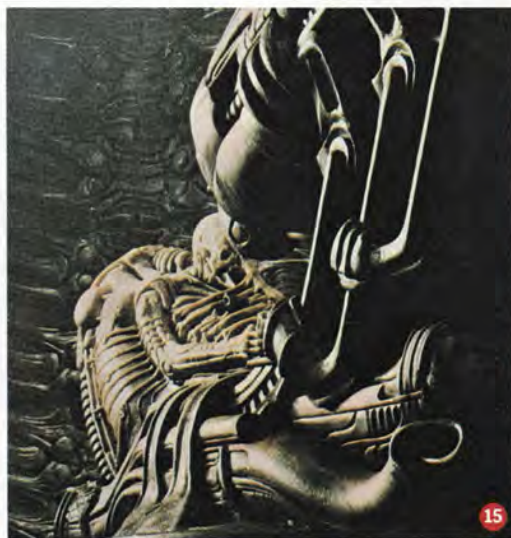
Elsewhere, mechanical animation techniques helped develop paradoxically human faces: they put the simper on the features of Truffaut's skinny friend at the conclusion of *Close Encounters of the Third Kind* (1977) and even more complex expressions across the flat barrel which was E.T.'s head. It's not surprising to learn that the face of E.T. quoted from specific human models, though Carlo Rambaldi has denied the rumour that Spielberg asked him to combine the features of Einstein, Dos Passos and Hemingway: "I took

part of him from a painting I did in 1952 of women in the Po delta", he has said. "The frontal aspect I got from oriental cats". Big budgets have also permitted movies, once in a

while, to catch up with some of the alien visions that have long been common in print: the menacing polymorph of Carpenter's *The Thing*, for example, is much closer than Hawks' thinking carrot to the John W. Campbell story 'Who Goes There?' which inspired both films. (Carpenter also deserves an honourable mention for the best of all low-budget aliens: the beach ball with attitude in *Dark Star*, 1974.) In *Cocoon* and *The Abyss*, we have seen creatures of blazing light, delicate and eerie as Victorian fairy paintings; in *Alien*, the giant corpse of an otherworld pilot whose biomechanoid torso is hard to distinguish from the surrounding hardware.

Venturous as they are, these designs may still be too earthbound. Some philosophers of SETI (the Search for Extra-Terrestrial Intelligence) have speculated that if we do ever come face to face, um, whatever with other sentient life, it may be so radically different from ourselves as to defy recognition. Which is why one of the most poetic treatments of the theme, 2001, *A Space Odyssey* (1968) may also be the most 'realistic', since it shows how the presence of the beings who are mankind's evolutionary puppet masters cannot be perceived, only inferred from their cryptic artefacts. Directors have proved understandably wary of picking up the glove thrown down by Kubrick, and few have risen to the challenge posed by the wilder flights of, say, Philip K. Dick in imagining the look of the alien.

Indeed, perhaps the most timid note of all was recently struck by *Communion* (1989), the only film in the history of cinema to purport to represent real life aliens, and which shows them to look (ah, but you guessed) exactly like guys, or kids, in reptile suits. Either director Whitley Strieber has a highly derivative fantasy life, or else those vast spaces out there really are filled with the spawn of Méliès' two-legged lobsters.



11: 'Dark Star' (1974)
12: 'The Man Who Fell to Earth' (1976)
13: 'Close Encounters of the Third Kind' (1977)
14: 'Superman' (1978)



Who are the aliens, and why have they proved so fascinating to us, asks Annette Kuhn?

Border crossing

Alien: foreigner, stranger, outlander, outsider, non-native, immigrant, newcomer. Thesaurus

The aliens of science fiction are capable of assuming many forms; but, whatever its guise, the alien is always, by definition, *different*. The idea of the alien already assumes a point of view: whoever names the alien as such in the very act radically separates herself from it, and it from her. The alien's name is Other.

An open-and-shut case of Us and Them, it seems. Them, because the alien, in its newer senses (only in the last forty or fifty years has the word been applied to intelligent extra-terrestrial beings), as well as in its more time-honoured ones, very often takes on a plural quality – it isn't easy to see aliens as individuals. This must make it all the more difficult for Us to welcome Them, the strangers; all the more tempting to cast them out.

An alien is a person who belongs to a different political society than that in which he resides. Oxford English Dictionary (1871)

During the nineteenth century, the idea of bringing aliens within the remit of the law gained ground, and the word acquired a newer, more precise, meaning: aliens became foreign-born residents of a country.

Apologists for this shift point to a tendency in earlier times to look upon the alien as an enemy and to treat him as a criminal or outlaw. Now, though, the alien could enjoy legal protection from such barbaric treatment. Under the aegis of a liberal state, the alien was no longer to be the eternal outsider: armed with a passport, the alien could expect to travel freely among us; might even – given naturalisation – become one of Us.

In this process, the documented alien, if no longer an outcast, is made visible, subject to observation and regulation as

much as to protection. In 1905, thirty-five years after the passage of the Naturalisation Act, a new piece of legislation let this particular cat out of the bag. The Aliens Act prohibited the landing in the UK of "undesirable alien steerage passengers". Such people were called "immigrants", in terms which suggest the usage was new.

Aliens, it seems, continue to be outcasts if they arrive among us in large enough numbers and without the proper documents. The stranger can be welcomed – just as long as he is only passing through. But let him be travelling in a crowd and intending to settle, and he will be eyed more warily: for at this point, he becomes an anonymous face in the teeming, faceless mass of immigrant aliens whose otherness bids to threaten our own way of life.

Since the word 'alien' first entered science fiction argot, the aliens of science fiction cinema have taken on some of the contradictory qualities, as well as the increased visibility, of those terrestrial aliens – in a sense equally fictional – offspring of the new laws regulating the movements of foreigners during the years of cinema's own gestation and birth. In science fiction, though, the Us/Them divide maps on to human/alien to produce a set of oppositions that underlie the mythic themes of many a science fiction film: Culture vs Nature, Reason vs Instinct, and, of course Good vs Evil. But things are not always quite so clear cut: boundaries can be permeable, and it is sometimes difficult to determine who or what belongs on which side of the divide.

In particular, like the outlanders enshrined in nineteenth-century law, the extra-terrestrials of science fiction are cast as threatening in direct relation to their numbers, their anonymity, their highly visible (or sometimes, conversely, their utterly imperceptible) difference from Us; and in inverse relation to their possession of the intergalactic equivalents of entry visas and return tickets. Consequently, the alien of science fiction often constitutes a threat: but this is not always the case. In films like *The Day the Earth Stood Still*, *E.T. The Extra-terrestrial* and *Starman*, the alien is a lone traveller. He might enter human society

uninvited, but his mission is nonetheless redemptive: he will redeem us from the consequences of our own hubris or folly, save humankind from moral and racial extinction. This messianic alien carries the 'passport' of a name, a personality. He either looks human, or assumes an unthreatening childlike or animal-like appearance. He comes as a stranger, and as such may not be immediately welcomed into human society. If he is unwelcome, though, we are made privy to the pain of his exclusion. Welcomed or not, mission complete, this extra-terrestrial being will return home. The alien messiah is a visitor, not an immigrant.

Other offcomers may be less desirable, less capable of accommodation. The alien of the *Alien* series, for instance, must surely be among the most threatening of science fiction cinema's extra-terrestrials. In *Alien*, Us/Them is unequivocally Human/Non-human; but the non-human category subdivides further – into the techno-products of corporate culture (Ash, The Company's android; Mother, the spaceship's duplicitous computer system) as against the rampantly fecund, visibly Other alien, a manifestation of monstrous Nature. Human hero Ripley's long-drawn-out struggle with the alien at the end of the film is as timelessly epic as any dragon-slaying. Yet her antagonist's enormity, its ghastly Otherness, is made spectacularly visible on screen, through cinema's display of its state-of-the-art special effects technology. Nameless and legion, this immigrant insinuates itself into every crevice of the ship, the humans' 'home', to keep on and on destroying its human foes and reproducing itself. Having no home of its own to return to, it must take over 'our' space. An undesirable alien, indeed.

In other films – *Invasion of the Body Snatchers*, for instance, or John Carpenter's *The Thing* – the fear inspired by the alien arises not from its spectacularly visible difference from Us, but from its very opposite, its *invisibility*, its outward resemblance to Us, or its capacity to mimic the human form. Again, it is a question of point of view: the promise of truth in the visibility of the image on screen turns out to

be deceptive. It is impossible to determine, from what we see, who is human and who is not: these undesirable aliens are invading our territory and undermining our culture and way of life, but insidiously, imperceptibly.

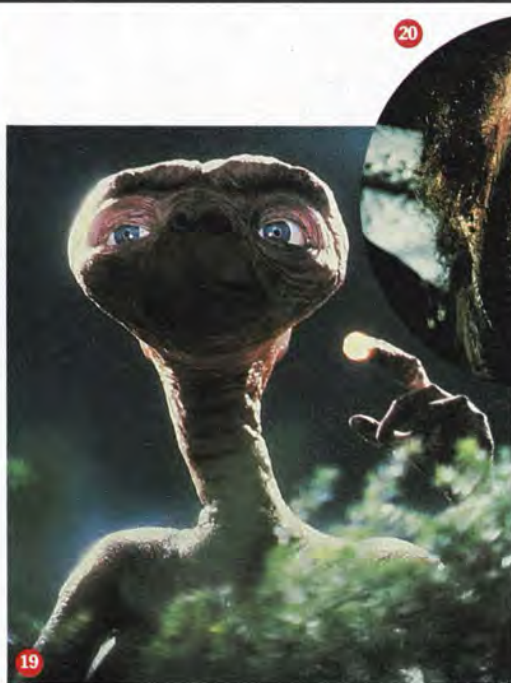
The primitiveness of the reaction the invaders evoke – in both life and art – suggests something deeper than polite anxiety about social mores. In science fiction, certainly, the fear of the undesirable alien – so much more interesting than the goody-goody alien redeemer – combines with a terrible enticement. That these uninvited and threatening outsiders are without exception propelled by an unswerving and completely amoral lust to invade, conquer, multiply, suggests a clue. *The id of course knows no judgments of value: no good and evil, no morality. Freud's New Introductory Lectures on Psychoanalysis (1933)*

A survivor, unclouded by conscience or delusions of morality": in expressing his admiration for the alien, the android Ash in *Alien* echoes Freud's description of the primitive unconscious and at the same time pinpoints the salient characteristic of all science fiction's aliens. Monsters from the Id, indeed.

But if the undesirable alien is indeed a monster from the id (and the messianic alien a manifestation of the superego?), we should not forget that the primitive unconscious – buried, repressed or denied as it might be – is just as much a part of the human psyche as the superego. The id belongs to us; and it belongs to the very Us who seek to cast the alien as different, Other. Perhaps the threat of the undesirable alien lies after all not in its strangeness, its difference from Us, but – like Freud's 'Uncanny' – in its very familiarity, its quality of being known of old, yet long forgotten. If this unconscious recognition of the undesirable alien does not quite transform it into something desirable, it might go some way towards explaining the fascination it holds for us: the allure of the distorting mirror, perhaps? As someone says in *The Forbidden Planet* (Fred McLeod Wilcox, 1956), "That thing out there is you!"



15: 'Alien' (1979)
16: Francis Bacon '3 Studies for Figures at the Base of a Crucifixion', detail (1944)
17: 'The Empire Strikes Back' (1980)
18: 'The Empire Strikes Back' (1980)



21



19: 'E.T. The Extra-terrestrial' (1982)
20: 'The Thing' (1982)
21: 'Alien Nation' (1988)
22: 'Communion' (1989)



22

Malcolm Imrie introduces the work and preoccupations of Serge Daney, regarded as France's greatest living film critic, who writes below about 'The Lover'

Born in 1944 – a year which, he has suggested, also saw the birth of modern cinema, as Rossellini began shooting *Rome, Open City* – Serge Daney wrote his first article for *Cahiers du cinéma* in 1964, going on to become its editor from 1973 to 1981. Throughout the 80s he wrote regularly on film and television for *Libération*, first in a daily column, 'Les fantômes du permanent', and later in short essays, like the one here, for the paper's 'Rebonds' page. He has just launched a new cinema magazine in France, *Trafic*. Daney has published four collections of criticism: *La Rampe* (1983), *Ciné journal* (1986), *Le Salaire du zappeur* (1988), and – its title taken from the French cinema warning 'watch your bags' – *Devant la recrudescence des vols de sacs à main* (1991).

That 'Falling out of Love' is one of only three articles translated into English from a writer generally regarded as France's greatest living film critic says a lot about the insularity of British culture. It also makes the task of introducing him rather daunting. One way of situating his work may be to mention some of the writers he himself uses as reference points.

First and foremost, there is André Bazin, founder of *Cahiers du cinéma*: "Bazin is at the centre of *Cahiers* and of my work. Because, if you can't believe a little in what you see on the screen, it's not worth wasting your time on cinema". Almost as important has been another *Cahiers* writer, Jean Douchet: "He taught us to look at films in detail, even to the point of a kind of interpretative delirium, which, given the platitudes of contemporary criticism, isn't such a terrible thing". One could add Guy Debord, whose *The Society of the Spectacle* – as this article may indicate – was a formative text; Félix Guattari (Daney often repeats his claim that cinema has been the closest thing we have to mass psychoanalysis) and Gilles Deleuze. Deleuze himself has praised Daney's "ceaseless quest for profound connections between cinema and thought" and his insistence on film criticism's poetic and aesthetic role, as well as noting the tension in his work between his passionate enthusiasm for the aleatory, singular, redemptive 'supplements' of meaning to be found in even the most banal films, and his awareness of the threatened future of both cinema and the critic.

Thomas Elsaesser was right to point out (S&S April 1992) that for Daney, cinema and its history "has become a kind of truth, namely our truth", but

wrong to suggest that his move to *Libération* marked his "embracing, indeed celebrating, television, advertising and commercial video". Daney has described cinema as something which "accompanies" the world: its antithesis is television, "which shows the world the door, or puts it on a waiting-list". Daney was not a television critic ("There will never be any television critics"): far from embracing television, his column in *Libération* was an attempt to see what happened to films, and life, as television embraced them. As Deleuze has argued, Daney doesn't attack television for its imperfections but for its perfection, its perfect, controlling combination of the technical and the social and, as a result, its nullity in terms of aesthetics and ideas.

Despite his constant search for exceptions, signs of life and innovation, it's evident that Daney's pessimism towards television has increased. One obvious turning point came with the Gulf War, a frequent target of his *Libération* pieces. "According to US strategy, if you never see the other, his destruction will be more acceptable... so that when Iraqi soldiers surrendered, sooner than expected, it was as if they emerged from a dream, a flash-back, a lost epoch – an epoch when the enemy still had a body and was still 'like us'. We could call that

epoch cinema". Another stage in what he has called "the marketing of the individual, the disappearance of experience" has been marked by the spread of the "reality shows" he refers to in this article: television has finally been handed over to the people, on condition, of course, that the people hand themselves over to television, become a "tele-people".

Daney has described himself as a *passeur*, a border-crosser, a go-between. And his writing has always displayed the delight in discovery, the garrulous erudition and the generosity which are the hallmarks of a good *passeur*, a good critic. But the days of the *passeur*, he fears, may be numbered. "Because the media no longer ask those who know something (or love something or, worst of all, know why they love something) to share that knowledge with the public. Instead they ask those who know nothing to represent the ignorance of the public and, in so doing, to legitimate it. To 'speak for others' always comes down to claiming *droit de seigneur* over their ignorance. Cinema's greatness lay in the fact that an individual (a director, a writer, an actor) could in some way touch another individual in the collective anonymity of the auditorium. Which is elitist, for sure, but it's a popular elitism. It can work for anybody".

FALLING OUT OF LOVE

In Annaud's 'The Lover', set in 20s Vietnam, every image is an orphan, argues Serge Daney, who sees its director as a new – and profoundly ignorant – kind of film-maker

● There is an expression in French which people use, apologetically, to describe a film during which they have had difficulty staying awake: *Ça m'est tombé des yeux*, literally, 'It fell from my eyes'. A rather nice phrase, which seems to register the fact that every film is simultaneously projected twice: once on to the cinema screen and once on to our retinas. It is almost as if, when we 'take in a movie', we have to hold it in the depths of our eyes, and cannot do so – cannot make it stick – without the 'clothes pegs' which constitute our appreciation of that beautiful thing we call cinema.

A film which 'falls from your eyes' is one where you have to keep readjusting your retina, just as circus clowns keep pulling up their trousers. The tears it produces are fake tears, caused by conjunctivitis not emotion. And the anger it provokes is also fake, born of irritation not revolt. It is in this sense that bad films are fake films.

L'Amant (*The Lover*) is a film which falls from your eyes. As a production it is somewhat less alarming than the campaign of intimidation which accompanied its launch, and it would

merely inspire pity were it not for the realisation that with Annaud we now have the prototype – fully operational at last – of a new breed of film-maker: the 'post-film-maker', in other words, one who knows nothing of what cinema once knew.

But he didn't start yesterday. Annaud found his Road to Damascus a decade ago, when he had the truly blinding intuition that everything which had for so long been 'natural' in cinema – the fact that there were men and women, bodies and characters, emotions and experiences, *stories* in short – was destined to fall into a kind of 'dark continent' which henceforth we could only reach from outside, with the help of ever more rhetorical and consensual simulations (of which US 'reality shows' represent the televisual pits).

Annaud is thus the chief usherette who was present at the birth of humanity (*La Guerre du feu*) and its middle age (*The Name of the Rose*), at a young animal's introduction to life in the wild (*The Bear*) and a young girl's introduction to eroticism (*The Lover*). So it was that he put his stamp on several media events of the 80s, years which – let us not forget – were inevitably marked by the

regrettable revival of old mythologies in our televisual villages. Mythologies which needed a new aesthetic matrix (advertising and its kitsch imagery) and, eventually, a new kind of communicator, devoid of feeling (Annaud, for example).

For unlike Besson and Beineix, who are more talented or are still consumed by the passion of cinema, Annaud has always made films in complete ignorance of the fact that there had been any cinema before him. By dint of imagining himself to be the guiding light shining on the first faltering steps of anything which moves, by dint of watching over the prehistory of our species and our origins as *Pithecanthropus Erectus*, Annaud forgot that there were others before him who had played with this marvellous device; with cinema and those clothes pegs which hold its images on our inflamed retinas.

To judge by the way *The Lover* has been promoted, it may well be that audio-visual barbarism has at last found its own Vandals. Will we ever convert them to Cinema? Who will save ►

Designer girl: Jane March as the young girl in the process of discovering the erotic in Jacques Annaud's 'The Lover', a kind of 'Emmanuelle' with literary gloss, argues Serge Daney



Annaud isn't just anyone; he is the first non-cinephile robot in the history of cinema

◀ us from them? Will they put us to the sword? And who are 'we' anyway? Let's just say that 'we' are the fans of clothes-peg cinema, people who have the increasingly distinct feeling of being *other*, other than Vandals.

Annaud, too, isn't just anyone; he is the first non-cinephile robot in the history of cinema. In the manual he mugged up in the space capsule which carried him through time to us, 'The Human Species in Twenty Story-Boards', he read that cinema consisted of 'telling a story in pictures'. And one feels that he will never get beyond that particular cliché, that he will always know what cinema should look like, that it should be a 'summary' of human feeling and human behaviour. But that is indeed all he knows: his knowledge is that of the robot who doesn't know that he doesn't know everything.

He doesn't know, for example, that there are things which you see without really seeing them, and others which stare you in the face but don't reflect any real experience; that there are moments when you must not make too much noise; that there are things which are omnipresent but insignificant, and others which are absent but powerful; that there are collective lies and partial truths – in short, that there are experiences which cinema sometimes finds it hard to approach (yet its dignity lies in the attempt). This is hardly surprising. It wasn't in the manual, because the manual – well produced though it was – was written by advertisers, during the 80s.

Let us go back to the cinema, to our retinas and clothes pegs. Why does this film fall from our eyes? Because something essential – essential to cinema – has disappeared. Cinema has always depended on a simple fact: the knowledge that something communicates itself from one frame to the next, one image to the next, one moment to the next, one shot to the next, and that these all end up constituting a logical and entangled fabric, full of twisted threads; one where the viewer doesn't have to be continuously 'grabbed' in order to be implicated, involved, delighted and caught up in new configurations of space-time. That is why all the great manipulators of the audience – from Hitchcock to Tati, from Chaplin to Leone – have also been great logicians, who gambled on the pride which we had every right to feel – as viewers – when we had learned to see, to deduce, to imagine, on the basis of the rebus they offered us.

That pride vanished some time ago, to be replaced by mere enjoyment of the effects of 'filmed cinema'. It is undoubtedly to *faire cinéma* – to put on a show – in the manner of all the *parvenus* who seem to have acquired *droit de seigneur* over the entire world – to clothe himself in the cheap literary finery of a story signed 'Marguerite Duras' (a story where essentially there is nothing but moisture, heat haze, nervous flux and contagious sensuality), that Annaud accepted the very costly challenge of giving 'his' interpretation of a best-selling colonial novel. Which only makes all the more obvious the way that, for him, the manufacture of images has replaced cinema.

Let us take an example. Let us take a single

bad cut (there are quite a few in *The Lover*). If my memory serves me well (and I have no intention of seeing the film again to check), the first thing we see of the lover is one of his shoes. The shoe, extremely fashionable and expensive, is pointed towards the viewer, rather like a face, in a long, vacant close-up. A close-up which lasts long enough for the viewer to reach the following conclusion: these shoes don't come from Dolcis and the feet which are wearing them aren't just any old feet. And indeed in the following image we see the elegant, finely-dressed form of the Chinese lover straightening out before us as he steps from his luxury car. The problem is that between the way the shoe is positioned in relation to the viewer and the movement of the actor's body there is, dare I say it, a degree of awkwardness, of clumsiness, which results in the image 'falling from the eyes' for lack of clothes pegs. In short, the tragedy of the bad cut.

Of course I appreciate that a bad cut isn't a crime and doesn't shock anyone. But this time it's not because – as in the days of *A bout de souffle* – cinema is trying to overturn the dusty old rules which say 'how' one should cut. No, it's because Annaud's work no longer has *anything at all* to do with memory, sequence, time, montage. This is cinema where there is no communication, because everything is communicated. The shoe is an item from the script which has turned into a surreptitious little advert for an attractive, marketable object, a kind of Indochinese Bally, just like all the other promotional objects in the film, from the virgin car to the designer girl.

But readers will point out, of course, that the vast majority of the press and television has endorsed the thing. That is true, unfortunately. And, they will add, the film is a success and no one has complained. Only too true. So it is now that I must show myself worthy of this publication and introduce someone very important to the life and death of films: nothing less than the viewer. Let us return – I'm afraid we must – to our shoe.

For if the scene is so long, so badly cut and so insulting to the viewer's intelligence, it is not only because Annaud has a poor notion of his audience's critical faculties, it is also because he assembles his 'film' as a series of orphan images, images which must, *one by one*, be seen, recognised and, so to speak, *ticked off* by the spectator-consumer.

In this aesthetic, an image never finds its sequel, its mystery or its elucidation in another, more or less contiguous image. Henceforth, images are to be 'scanned' twice, once by the post-film-maker who signs them and once by the post-public who endorses them. They are only presented to the audience (and no longer articulated with other elements in the film) as a kind of preview, a run-through of *visuals*, not the sharing of a *vision*. ('You saw nothing in Cholon, nothing') [Cholon is the Saigon suburb in which *The Lover* is set. The reference is to *Hiroshima mon amour*: 'Tu n'as rien vu à Hiroshima, rien'] The images queue up on a waiting-list, to be submitted for public approval, for instant endorsement, for God knows what kind of mark of confidence.

Let us be serious. Many people have talked

about contemporary individualism and its paradoxes. One of these paradoxes is nothing less than a certain eradication of *taste* among a public who are more adult, that is, better informed, less naive, better off, easily bored, happily cruising among the various lifeless luxuries which the market tosses in their direction. These spectators, proud of their independence and well aware of their power, nonetheless have to face the rather comic obligation to adopt as 'theirs' all the latest clichés and the conformism of their social group, with the proviso that they can feel they are living and 'organising' these *on their own behalf*.

And nothing makes them angrier than pointing out that for all their individuality, their independence, their refusal to follow fashions and formulae, they are still trotting out the same stunningly conformist idiocies as their closest neighbours. Which is why film critics, and indeed critics in general, for the simple reason that they dislike clichés and off-the-peg ideas, are an endangered species. In a world where the *personal appropriation of clichés* is a condition for the spread of cultural tourism, that's hardly surprising.

What, then, is this close-up of the Chinese shoe? Nothing less than a cry. The shoe cries out to be recognised, recognised in its advertising essence as solitary shoe, in its radical *shoeness* (Heidegger's celebrated *Schuhekeit*). It cries out that it means something. It cries out that it's been selected by Annaud for the spectator, in the same way as bingo numbers are called out for players to cross off their cards. Too bad for anyone accustomed to cinema, who waits impatiently for the next scene to follow, irritated by the way this film falls from his eyes. For there is no scene to follow, merely another image which in turn will demand approval and authentication by the spectator.

What was bound to happen has happened. From now on the spectator-consumer is confronted by an image *which resembles him*, which, like him, proclaims it has no need of others (other images, but also sound and duration) in order to create social and domestic kitsch (in this case, a kind of *Emmanuelle* with a bit of literary gloss).

The result, of course, is lamentable. For having become master of all he surveys in a film which is communicated to him image by image, the spectator is trapped by his own feeble status as consumer-decoder. He hasn't time to understand anything which he didn't already 'know' – which leaves him with nothing, with the already-seen or the scarcely seen at all, with ads and logos, visuals and kitsch, in short, with banalities and platitudes.

How utterly pointless it was for Annaud to have shot the film in the real Vietnam. Hadn't the unfortunate man already ensured there was no danger of his camera accidentally recording a few seconds of unprocessed reality? But in an age of synthetic images and synthetic emotions, the chances of an accidental encounter with reality are remote indeed.

M. Daney died in Paris 12 June 1992, as this issue went to press

July Releases from Connoisseur Video

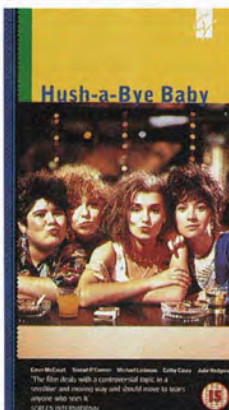


Eat the Peach

Director: Peter Ormrod/Certificate PG

Based on a true story, Peter Ormrod's tragi-comic tale of aspiring no-hopers follows the misadventures of two Irish villagers, Vinnie (Stephen Brennan) and Arthur (Eamon Morrissey), made unemployed by the closure of a Japanese electronics factory, who take inspiration from an old Elvis movie and blow their redundancy money on building a motorcycle 'Wall of Death'.

'One of the most successful wholly Irish features ever made.' Derek Malcolm, The Guardian

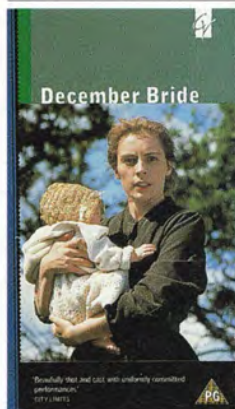


Hush-a-Bye Baby

Presented by the Derry Film and Video Workshop/Certificate 15

This remarkable debut feature from the Derry Film and Video Workshop manages successfully to combine several contentious issues, including unwanted teenage pregnancy, the Irish abortion referendum and the 'supergrass' trials, in its exuberant, down-to-earth portrayal of four fifteen year old girls growing up in Derry against the backdrop of 'the troubles'. Emer McCourt and Sinéad O'Connor turn in fine performances as troubled teenagers.

'A sure, light touch that does a great deal to humanise the issues... an impressive achievement.' Time Out

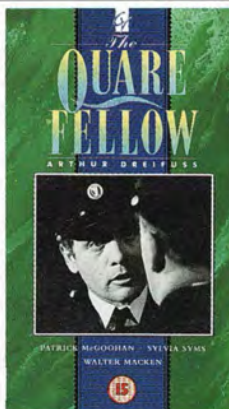


December Bride

Director: Thaddeus O'Sullivan/Certificate PG

Unfolding against the rolling contours of the beautiful Ulster coastline Thaddeus O'Sullivan's *December Bride* is a brooding and stunningly photographed drama of broken taboos within the harshly repressive atmosphere of a turn-of-the-century Presbyterian community. The film stars Saskia Reeves in her screen debut.

'Director Thaddeus O'Sullivan's careful compositions and Bruno de Keyzer's exquisite cinematography lend the film a stark, simple grandeur which in turn emphasises the harsh, physical nature of the characters' lives' Time Out



The Quare Fellow (re-issue)

Director: Arthur Dreifuss/Certificate 15

'A funny tragedy, a happy-go-lucky horror show, a gay little wake for the dead who have died in the name of justice – the kind of justice that demands a life for a life. Like the play, the picture ignores the rational arguments against capital punishment. It takes the audience inside an Irish prison and bolts the gate: and then with a world of Irish charm and humour shows everybody round the dear old place, shows everybody how it feels to live in a cell – and die on a rope.' Time.

Starring: Patrick McGoohan, Sylvia Syms, Walter Macken

CONNOISSEUR VIDEO/ SIGHT AND SOUND READERS' OFFER

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- ... copies of 'Eat the Peach' at £14.99 each
- ... copies of 'Hush-a-Bye Baby' at £14.99 each
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All four of the above films will be available from June 15 at the mail order price of £14.99 plus postage and packing. Postage and packing is £1.50 for the first tape and 50p for each additional tape. Credit card bookings only on 081 399 0022.

Do you want Beamish Stout with your 'Inspector Morse', asks Graham Murdock, as he rejects programme sponsorship on television?

BRANDED IMAGES

With the re-election of a Conservative government intent on completing its restructuring of broadcasting, advertising looks set to become a central focus of concern. The promised public debate on the future of the BBC will certainly feature renewed calls for the introduction of advertising on the corporation's main channels. As the Channel 3 companies who overbid for their franchises run into financial difficulties and Channel 5 (if it goes ahead) struggles through its expensive start-up period, the Independent Television Commission will inevitably come under pressure to relax the present rules on advertising within the independent television system. And as Channel 4 begins to sell its own air-time, more and more of its supporters will claim that its original commitment to innovation and experiment is being compromised by the search for larger audiences.

These are important issues, but they represent only one aspect of the shifting relations between programme-making and advertising finance. Corporate promotion is no longer confined to clearly marked advertising 'breaks'; we are entering the age of the branded image. Through various forms of sponsorship and product placement, publicity for companies and their products is becoming integrated into the programmes themselves, as a logical and 'natural' part of the way the contemporary world is pictured and talked about. Despite the best efforts of regulators, these embedded persuasions are difficult to control. But why should we wish to? After all, couldn't money from sponsorship and product placement tip the financial scales in favour of a programme that might not otherwise get made? This is an enticing argument, but it confuses plurality with diversity. The issue is not the number of programmes made, but the variety of viewpoints they represent.

The rise of branded images raises serious problems for the ideal of broadcasting as a public cultural space, in which the widest possible range of voices can speak and new ways of looking be explored. To ensure that this space remains as open as possible, broadcasters must remain independent of the key centres of political power. But equally importantly, they must minimise their dependency on the promotional material generated by major industrial and financial companies.

Corporations have a right to represent themselves within the broadcasting system, but not to determine who else will be represented and

how. The problem arises because the money they pay to screen advertisements for themselves provides the major source of finance for production in general. In response, British regulators have built a series of walls to keep advertising and programming apart. Advertisements have been confined to well-signposted spaces; severe restrictions have been placed on programme sponsorship; product placement has been banned.

But can these walls survive in the new broadcasting environment? The signs are not encouraging. The history of commercial television in the UK is a history of continual attempts to exploit cracks in the brickwork, sometimes with considerable success, as the advertising magazines in the early days of ITV show.

In a typical example such as *Shop in the South* (hosted by BBC personalities Sylvia Peters and McDonald Hobley), a range of goods was displayed and talked about in a simple studio set. But the more ambitious admag, such as *Jim's Inn*, set out to entertain at the same time. *Jim's Inn* featured a public bar, a forerunner of the Rover's Return in *Coronation Street*, presided over by a jovial landlord and peopled by a continuing cast of characters – the local spiv, the brassy beauty salon owner – who promoted a variety of products, from Player's cigarettes to coats from a local department store. Since the time allowed for advertising magazines was additional to the six minutes per hour agreed for spot ads, they significantly increased advertisers' access to the screen. The ITA was prepared to allow them, providing that the amount of time given to advertising did not "detract from [their] value as a medium of entertainment, instruction and information". As the Pilkington Committee pointed out in 1962, however, the more entertaining and like other programmes the admag became, the more the line between programming and advertising was blurred. This argument carried the day: the admag were banned and the wall dividing advertising from programming rebuilt. Present efforts to test the limits of sponsorship regulations and to evade the ban on product placement represent a renewed attempt to dismantle this wall, though one with greater ramifications for programme-making.

One of the ITC's first major acts (after taking over responsibility for regulating commercial television from the IBA) was to publish revised guidelines on programme sponsorship that allowed sponsors access to all programmes, except news and current affairs and those dealing with political or industrial controversies or current public policy debates. Sponsors are allowed a ten second aural and visual credit at the beginning of the programme, a seven second credit at the end, a similar 'bumper credit' before advertising breaks, and a five second mention in any trailers. In an effort to prevent them from interfering in creative decisions, they are not permitted to have "any influence on either the content or the scheduling", or to have themselves or their products mentioned within the programme itself.

The major beneficiaries so far of this relaxation of the rules have been popular drama series: *Rumpole of the Bailey* (Croft Port); *Inspector*

Morse (Beamish Stout); and *Maigret* (Kronenberg). This is not surprising. Because they centre on a sympathetic major character with a clearly defined lifestyle, they offer an ideal way of securing the promotion through association that is sponsorship's *raison d'être*. The main character doesn't have to use the product for this to work; they simply have to be the kind of person for whom its consumption would be 'natural'. As Courage's publicity briefing, announcing the *Inspector Morse* deal, pointed out, the series is a "perfect vehicle for Beamish Stout" because "Morse is an intelligent, sensitive and reflective character who appreciates a quality product and enjoys drinking in a traditional local".

Single plays offer a much more restricted 'window of opportunity' for sponsors. They are likely to be shown only once; there is no guarantee of video release; and because they often deal with the underside of contemporary life, they feature situations and lifestyles that sponsors may not wish to be associated with. Increased reliance on sponsorship funding for television fiction could therefore squeeze out the single play, further restricting one of the major opportunities for the open and innovative exploration of controversial issues. As John Mepham has argued, what is at stake here is not a matter of 'quality', as defined by professional production values or conventional aesthetic criteria, but of diversity of expression, of keeping open spaces in which questions can be articulated, uncomfortable contradictions explored, invisible experiences brought to light, and marginalised groups given a voice.

Potential sponsors have been quick to reassure critics that interfering with creative decisions is furthest from their mind, and that they see sponsorship as just another way to raise awareness of company or brand names. But even if sponsors refrain from intervening once a project is under way, by backing some projects rather than others, by favouring the mainstream and the well established, and by shunning controversy and experiment, they are still in a position to exercise considerable influence on the overall mix and style of programming. Moreover, it is by no means clear that every sponsor is prepared to adopt a hands-off approach. When the Granard Rowland consultancy questioned the marketing directors of the top 150 UK companies in 1989, half said they believed that sponsors should have some influence over programme content.

The BBC refuses to allow direct sponsorship of programme production and confines itself to covering sponsored events that have "an existence independent of television coverage". But the definition of what counts as "independent" is not always self-evident. When BBC2 announced a £1.3 million deal linking Lloyd's Bank to the *Young Musician of the Year* contest in 1990, a number of commentators argued that since the contest had been created by the BBC and had been running for some years, it should not be counted as an independent event. And the problem of maintaining boundaries is compounded where programmes are commissioned from independent producers, since checks on procedure are more difficult to con-

duct. In 1986, for example, BBC had to cancel the scheduled screening of a documentary on lorry drivers, *Night Moves*, when it was discovered that it had been partly funded by motor industry interests in the expectation of favourable publicity.

But a corporation doesn't have to sink money into a production to have some influence over its content. It can achieve considerable visibility for its brands, logo and company name by paying to have them featured in a film or television programme – a process known as product placement.

There are two main variants on this: 'creative' placements, whereby a product (or an advertisement for it) is shown in the background of a shot, and 'on-set' placements, where the product is displayed more prominently or is mentioned or used by one of the central characters. Both forms are currently prohibited in all BBC productions and in all programmes that fall within the ITC's terms of reference. Real products are, of course, featured in television dramas and brand names are often clearly visible, but since no money has changed hands these instances are not counted as product placements. This flexible attitude to product display is relatively recent, however. Previously, programme-makers went to considerable lengths to conceal brand names from the camera or to invent fictitious ones. Actual brands are now accepted in the interests of dramatic 'realism', providing that no one product or manufacturer is given undue publicity, and accordingly, many programmes attempt to ensure a rough equality of visibility. Given that soap operas are named after Proctor and Gamble's sponsorship of the early US radio variants of the genre, it is perhaps appropriate that the house rules for *EastEnders* require the soap powders used in the launderette to rotate among the major brands.

No matter how clear the rules, however, there will inevitably be people who are caught or accused of breaking them. This possibility entered popular debate at the end of 1991 when the *Sun* carried a front page story headed: "Rustie's Racket. Telly Cook Plugged Food to Get Secret Cash Backhanders". The story accused Rustie Lee of accepting money from food manufacturers in return for promoting their products during her cookery demonstrations on TV-am's breakfast show. As the radio industry has known for a long time, opportunities for personal payola can never be completely controlled, and in the new, more competitive broadcasting environment, they may well increase. But in the long run they are less significant than the increased scope for placements produced by changes in the organisation of television production itself.

As more and more responsibility for programme-making is concentrated in the hands of independent producers, so the lines connecting commissioning editors and production teams become more attenuated and policing the rules more problematic. Set-dressing is particularly difficult to monitor, especially where props are being supplied by an outside agency. As Sarah Fiddian of Prop Place has explained, "We deal with props buyers who need to fill

their sets as cheaply as possible. There are going to be branded goods on show. We just try to make sure they are ours". As she points out, "What we do is not illegal, underhand or unprofessional", though by promoting some brands above others, it clearly breaches existing broadcast conventions on equal visibility.

Bought-in feature films present an even greater challenge. Direct product placement in films is not new: from its inception, the cinema has enjoyed an intimate relationship with mass consumption and filming the contemporary world has meant filming a world saturated with branded goods and advertising displays. This symbolic relation was put on a commercial footing well before the First World War, with Hollywood studios regularly accepting fees in return for featuring particular goods on screen. This practice intensified in the early 30s as producers looked for ways to supplement falling box office receipts, with the result that studios became more active in soliciting placements, often sending out shot-by-shot breakdowns of scripts with promotional opportunities clearly marked. Sometimes they dealt directly with manufacturers and sometimes with the new broking agencies that had sprung up to place products for a fee.

The present intensification of placement activity dates from 1982, when the alien in *E.T.* was enticed from his hiding place by a trail of Reese's Pieces sweets, producing a 300 per cent increase in the brand's sales. Since then, placement has become an integral part of Hollywood film-making, with Associated Film Promotions and similar agencies continually scanning new scripts on behalf of their clients. Sums for on-set promotions range from the \$100,000 that Kimberley-Clark paid to have Huggies nappies featured in *Baby Boom* and used on its infant star in publicity, to Philip Morris' \$350,000 outlay to have James Bond use their Lark cigarette brand in *Licence to Kill*.

The main value of placement to the client lies in 'product positioning'. As Nick Farley of the Dorlands advertising agency puts it, "With ordinary advertising you can only say so much. With placement you can hint at what kind of product it is far more effectively. For example, you can always see cars, but placement says this is the kind of car driven by this kind of man". The other advantage is that, unlike spot ads, placements have an extended life in space and time as the film moves from the cinema, to video release, to cable and satellite services, and finally to broadcast television. And because placement opportunities are expressly designed to be integrated into the action, they are virtually impossible to edit out. It is difficult to imagine any broadcasting organisation cutting the crucial sweets scene from *E.T.*

Faced with the rapid expansion of advertising-supported services and the crisis of public funding, many observers of British broadcast-

ing see the struggle to limit the influence of branded imagery as the key to the survival of public broadcasting as an open cultural space. As Michael Grade, chief executive of Channel 4, has put it: "People strive for a definition of public service broadcasting, but I always think it's very simple. Public service broadcasting is creating programmes totally free of any commercial consideration". This is a touch too pure. In a production system financed by advertising, there will inevitably be compromises between the desires of programme-makers and the requirements of advertisers. The question is where this balance should be struck, and in deciding this, it is clear that spot advertising, strongly controlled, is less damaging to open debate and diversity of expression than programme sponsorship or product placement.

All forms of advertising finance have indirect effects on the style, mix and scheduling of programming, since all advertisers want to reach particular audiences and to find them in a receptive frame of mind. But sponsorship and product placement have the additional potential to affect the contents of programmes directly, shaping what will be said and shown, in line with corporate interests. As Roy Dukes, who handled the Goodyear tyre company's sponsorship of the weather forecasts on Super Channel argued: "Goodyear doesn't have editorial control over the weather, but what's wrong with asking the presenters to wear jackets?" To which a placement agent might add, and what's wrong if the jackets are supplied by Armani?

A programme system in which corporate speech and branded imagery, by virtue of its financial leverage, is increasingly privileged over other voices and other ways of looking may be good for business, but it poses severe problems for a democracy based on open debate and diversity of expression. It is a situation that raises several urgent issues for public debate and policy. First, it means arguing long and hard for the BBC's continued entitlement to a properly indexed licence fee so that it can make programmes independently of the advertising system. In addition, prohibitions on programme sponsorship and product placement should be written into the new Charter. At the same time, the BBC, together with Channel 4 and the Channel 3 companies, must increase internal scrutiny of sponsorship deals and take all reasonable steps to ensure that there are no instances of product placement in any broadcast television programmes, whether made in-house, commissioned from independent producers, or bought-in. In support, the ITC should make the policing of sponsorship and product placement a priority and be prepared to use automatic fines for non-compliance or negligence. And finally, the government should publicly admit that the recent Channel 3 franchise auction was a failure (even on its own terms) and redirect some of the money earmarked for the Treasury into a fund for independent film-making. These are small initiatives, but together they go some way towards underwriting broadcasting's essential role as an open cultural space and limiting the corporate capture of public expression.

When *E.T.* was enticed from his hiding place by a trail of sweets, it produced a 300% increase in the brand's sales

The Promised End: Sharon (Mimi Rogers) and daughter, waiting for God to appear to them; Sharon with her sexual confidant, in the life before her conversion, opposite





● Brothers and sisters, the time has come for me to make my testimony, to share with you my witness of an event which changed me for good and all. Only last year I was walking down Broadway with no direction to my life when I stopped before a movie house displaying a poster for *The Rapture*. Now friends, I have to confess that I had never heard the name of Michael Tolkin, believe me when I tell you I had not yet read his novel, *The Player*. I did not even know that it was Robert Altman's next movie – but then neither, to judge from the one other, loudly snoring, customer in that tiny downtown theatre, did anybody else in Manhattan. But something bigger than me drew me inside with a force I still do not understand and I thank Providence I was so drawn for I saw upon that screen something I was searching for and had expected never to find: an American film that takes religion at its word. When I came out into the pale light of an October evening I felt compelled to testify.

An overwhelming majority of the US population believes in the Christian God and a sizeable number of them subscribe to the doctrine that these are the Latter Days. Each one of them is a born-again semiotician, scouring the visible for evidence of the signs and wonders which, foretold in the (admittedly polysemic) Apocalypse of St John, precede the second coming of Jesus Christ, when the souls of the righteous will be taken to meet their Lord in the middle of the air. This event is known as the Rapture and there is a well-known painting, much reproduced on posters and postcards, which gives, in an effectively primitive style, a pictorial embodiment of this moment which all of the saved await with faith: a freeway running through a modern American city, flanked by tall buildings of glass and steel; presumably the Seventh Seal has just been broken, Gabriel's trumpet has sounded and the Lord has returned, because trucks, cars and motorbikes, previously piloted by the righteous, career destructively into hapless vehicles driven by we damned sinners who cast aside our chance at repentance but now are condemned to live through the thousand-year reign of the Antichrist. Eschato- ►



I AM A BELIEVER

Michael Eaton found his heart (and soul) soared when he saw 'The Rapture', Michael Tolkin's eerie film about fundamentalism

◀ logical specifics differ from group to group, but as anyone who has spent any time in the US will tell you, this is a belief held throughout all classes and races and, seemingly, has little to do with the mainstream practices and ideologies of the various Protestant strands in western Europe. (Which is why, incidentally, Tolkin's reference in his accompanying article to Bresson as a spiritual film-maker, despite a possible similarity in their unmoralising, undirective styles, is ultimately untenable.) Even the previous incumbent of the White House, we are told, determined his geo-political strategies via the Book of Revelations: Armageddon was not just a reality, it was a divine obligation, Gorbachev's birthmark was the mark of the Beast.

Perhaps the only sectors of society in which such doctrines are not axiomatic are the Jews, Communists and Homosexual Intellectuals who make up the Hollywood film community. On the evidence of the movies, we might think that America's metaphysics grants credence, on the one hand, to serial child killers who refuse to lie down when they're killed, or, in a rosier perspective, to side-tracked yuppies who can only re-centre once they've learned to embrace the innocent child within us all. The American film industry, in short, refuses to turn its gaze on the country's most widespread and insidious belief system: that fundamentalist Christianity which is the unofficial state religion. And this is why Michael Tolkin's film is so important.

When I was watching the movie, innocently unprepared by any of the advance publicity (of which, I guess, this piece has to be seen as an instance) I was entirely unable to fathom exactly where it was coming from until the very last scene, when all was made clear. To see it again a second time, or to have seen it prepped with a knowledge of Tolkin's other work or

'For a moment there, I thought that somebody was trying to convert me, that I might be as unsafe in a picture house as I was out on the street'

with the insights his accompanying article provide, would not re-create the scary frisson I felt living through my first viewing – for a moment there, I thought that somebody was trying to convert me, for a moment there I felt that I might be as unsafe in a picture house as I was out on the street.

It is not my purpose here to outline the plot of *The Rapture*; my role is only to urge you to see it because, unlike most movies, it is about something. However, it is necessary to say that a contributory reason to explain the uncomfortable viewing experience is that it is, to an extent, structured like a Christian film. Although Christianity is the dominant mental map of most Americans, Christian films remain sub-cultural. Occasionally, say in the pre-Vatican Two anti-socialist work of Leo McCarey, such as *Going My Way* or *Satan Never Sleeps*, the voice of the pulpit coincides with the screen, but Hollywood's religion has usually been of the sentimental feel-good variety which corresponds not a jot to the mystical terror of most believers' faith. Fundamentalist features, which bear many structural similarities to the official Chinese films made during the Cultural Revolution, in that their aim is to convert rather than to entertain, usually circulate not in cinemas, but in Mission Halls and

evangelical gatherings. These are films which exist to show you the error of your ways, to bring you to God, and as such they are as highly structured as that moment in a camp meeting when one of the born-again is wheeled out to present their autobiographical witness, their testimony.

Invariably this involves a highly-coloured and rather unbelievable elaboration of the witness' sinful and decadent lifestyle before they saw the light. (Somebody trying to convert me once told me how before he had met Jesus he had "dabbled" with drugs. The reaction he had expected was one of shock, but unfortunately I could only express a connoisseur's interest: "Which drugs?", I asked, "Well... illegal drugs!" was his unilluminating reply.) In *The Rapture*, we are forced to witness the degradation of Sharon's life as a 'swinger' – a life which, naturally, leaves her feeling only emptiness. Then, of course, at the end of Act One comes the moment of revelation – she accepts God.

The discomfort this film engendered in this seeker-after-truth is perhaps a result of the matter-of-fact way these scenes of sinning and repenting are presented. For example, there is nothing in the flat *mise en scène* which allows us the security of adopting a moral position towards Sharon's mundane foursome couplings. We may well be in the airless terrain of cheap pornography; we may well have stumbled into the wrong cinema. But when two besuited bicycling evangelists arrive at Sharon's apartment and convince her of the imminence of hell-fire, the presentation is equally uncontented. I trust it is not simply because this is a writer's first outing at the helm that the film lacks the formal stridency which is the usual rhetoric of contemporary American cinema. For a while here we do not know how we are supposed to feel – it makes us as vulnerable as a potential convert.

The next step in the narrative of the conversion text is that belief doesn't come easy. Act Two is usually concerned with testing, possibly through the death of a loved one or by contracting some debilitating disease – this movement ends with a crisis of faith. In *The Rapture*, this stage of the tale is almost programmatic: Sharon's wonderful Christian home is shattered when her husband is murdered. Act Three you can write yourself. You know how it has to end: through the Slough of Despond and on to the Heavenly City.

Not so, my friends, in *The Rapture*.

The great shock of this film is that when Sharon (and it must be said here that one of the great delights of this picture is Mimi Rogers' entirely convincing performance) does receive a much awaited sign, she is told that it is hers alone, and therefore may well not be a gift of God, but a snare of Satan. At this point the film, which had hitherto been uncomfortable, spirals into brilliance, making all that has gone before retrospectively brilliant – the allure of being one of the chosen runs headlong into the fear that belief is nothing more than paranoia.

During the course of *The Rapture* there are few arguments for and against fundamentalism which are not demonstrated honestly. Tolkin's strength is that he never belittles belief. Having seen the film for a second time, two questions remain: if God does exist, is He responsible for the idiocy of His believers? And, if it is His plan to crucify us on the internal contradictions of His wayward design, then who will forgive God's sins? Follow my path into the desert, friends: see this film.

'The Rapture' opens on 3 July and is reviewed on page 53 of this issue

Writer of *'The Player'*, Michael Tolkin, reflects on directing his first movie, *'The Rapture'*

Ecstatic states

I was given the choice by *Sight and Sound* to write about "either the shift from screenwriter to director/ screenwriter or about the making of *The Rapture*, or about the subject of faith and the cinema". Can we see if they connect?

The most difficult passage in the shift from screenwriter to director is the astonishing gift of responsibility, something that is more profoundly important than the lessons learnt about the technical issues surrounding the translation of the written to the filmed. In some ways, it's probably easier to make the adjustment from novelist to director, since in the novelist's control over the lives of his characters, and his isolation from the world, there develops the kind of megalomania necessary to control a production. The screenwriter, accustomed to a life of serving various masters who will always betray him, has some advantage in his reservoir of rage, but most screenwriters (and I was typical) are innocent of the real struggles involved in making a film, and perhaps traditionally have been shielded from the battle, in order to protect them from making things too easy for the company. Once, late in the fourth or fifth day of night-shooting on *The Rapture*, I swore to myself that I would never again type 'EXT. LOCATION – NIGHT'. Most good shots have a little blood in them, and a writer should not know what he's asking of people.

A little of the movie's history. *The Rapture* began as a twenty-two page script for a short film. I was sick of screenwriting, and *The Player* was barely forty pages long, when I finished, for the first time in twelve years and six or seven scripts, my first screenplay without a writing partner. It was called *Cowboy Heaven*, and the story is pitched in *The Player*, or at least, in the novel. (Perhaps we should now call it the pre-novelisation.) It's a sweet story, and one of my last attempts at writing something directly for the studios. I was still trying to write for Spielberg. (There's talk now of it finally getting made, which doesn't completely thrill me, since in some ways *The Rapture* was my response to *Cowboy Heaven's* failure.)

When I finished *Cowboy Heaven* I took a drive in the Mojave, and saw a bumper sticker that said "Warning, In Case Of Rapture, This Car Will Be Unmanned". The driver of the car was a born-again Christian, and the bumper sticker announced his faith in the imminent confirmation of Biblical prophecy, that he knows without

doubt that these are the last days, and that before the Battle of Armageddon is fought on Earth, he will become spirit, transported, in an instant, into Heaven, to meet Christ in the air.

Sometime later that day I got stopped for speeding by a San Bernardino county sheriff, an Officer Foster, whose name and job are now in the movie, and then I continued on, in a terrible frenzy, driving around the high desert for three days, incapable of stopping anywhere for more than half an hour. When I got home, I threw myself into my office, and for a month literally beat myself around the head, trying to tease a few images into a story. For a long time I had carried around a shelf full of ideas about movies, about religion, about California, and finally they had congealed into twenty-two pages.

When I was eleven I wrote a paper for a class assignment in which I said I wanted to be a director when I grew up. Now I was thirty-five, and I'd never looked through a camera, and I had these twenty-two weird pages. I showed the script to friends, family and a few studio executives, one of whom said that if I wanted any kind of career "in this town", I should put the script in a drawer and never show it to anyone again. Fortunately, Nick Wechsler read it, and said there was no sense in making a short, and promised that if I could write a full-length feature, he would produce it and I would direct. Five years later, his promise was fulfilled.

On the first day of shooting I walked on to a set with a crew of forty-five, ten actors, sixty extras and four producers. We shot that day in a church, where a mysterious child, the Boy, tells Sharon (Mimi Rogers), that the call she hears, telling her to go to the desert, is hers alone, and she will have no company. (In my original draft, everyone went, but we didn't have it in the budget.) It was an amazing day, like skiing well, or like seeing the light after a long meditation. Every second sparkled with feeling. The privilege was overwhelming. I wanted to cry.

The next morning, I woke up calculating the cost to my life if I got on a plane for Baja California. After a night's rest, I was miserable, scared. Nothing the day before had really gone well. What was I doing? My wife had to coax me into my clothes, and out of the door, and into my car, and when I came to the location, a neighbourhood in Hollywood, for the exterior shots of Sharon's



Breaking out: in prison, Sharon finds herself a soul sister from her previous life



At the end of the world: one of the Horsemen of the Apocalypse appears before a lesser authority, in Tolkien's 'The Rapture'

apartment, I sat in the car for fifteen minutes, afraid of everything. Finally I dragged myself to the set, where there was a problem with the camera, and we were three hours late getting our first shot, and by that time I was back in some control, but for another week those feelings of panic seldom left. Neither did the producers. Nick, Nancy Tanenbaum, Laurie Parker and Karen Koch were still there, telling me to fly, but staying in the nest.

After twelve days we arrived at the orgy, in which Sharon and Vic (Patrick Bauchau) take a couple of tourists back to his house. Something happened that night, another late start, and the dawn was fast approaching, and the producers were telling me to take charge, and I said that if they wanted me to take charge, they had to leave. They did. Now there was no one behind me when I looked over my shoulders and things began to improve. The crew stopped telling me to ignore the producers. But I was still thinking about everyone's feelings.

Two weeks later, out in the desert, we were shooting the scene where Foster (Will Patton) visits Sharon's campsite at night. It was Will's first night on the set. He was the most intense actor in the production, and I needed to concentrate with him. The set was noisy. I got angry at the First AD. I told him it was his job to keep things quiet, and I wanted the set quiet. I didn't want to see anyone in my peripheral vision. I wanted to see only those people who absolutely needed to be near the camera. I had a small tantrum.

Five minutes later, everything was different, quiet, even solemn. No one shouted. Conversation was at a whisper. I think the scene is one of the best in the movie. Yes, I was finally learning a few simple tricks to make a scene cut together, but more than that, I was learning, like a novelist, that I was responsible for every detail. At that point, at the point that I had a tantrum which was respected, the day that I was not punished for being difficult, I stopped being a screenwriter.

When the movie came out we weren't sure what we had. As the film festivals accepted it, first Telluride and Toronto and then New York, we kept

expecting someone to bring everyone to their senses and shuttle us straight to video. The critics were divided, although I was surprised at how many mainstream critics supported the movie, when writers for the alternative press were dismissive, or worse. We were on a number of ten best lists, and some of the ten worst.

Whenever I showed the film at a festival, or at a college, or at the two screenings we had for Christian audiences, one in Atlanta (the buckle on the Bible Belt) and one in Los Angeles, I would lead a question-and-answer period after the film. These discussions lasted from an hour to two hours, and were less about film than about religion. There were four positions on the film. The film is great, because it shows the necessity to believe in Christ. The film is great, because it shows the futility of religion, the arrogance of God. The film, being Christian propaganda, is evil. The film, being blasphemous, is evil. Often in these discussions, people would argue with each other, one person defending, one attacking the film, while I moderated. When I showed *The Rapture* at a film school where they had also just seen *The Player*, I asked that we talk about movie-making, not God, but after a few minutes I was back to the familiar debate about the film's meaning.

One of my standard answers to all the questions was to say this: I was trying to take back from Spielberg the idea that a spectacle has to be positive. The spectacle films of the last ten years had turned the audience into a lynch mob united behind the hero against an arbitrarily chosen villain. I wanted something different, to leave the audience atomised, with everyone forced into themselves, alone, thinking. Now, negativity may be just as easy a device as the relentlessly happy ending that defies all plausibility, but a film teacher told me that his students today, when shown *Shampoo*, complain that it isn't fair for George not to get the salon and Julie Christie. They don't want to feel anyone's loss. They resent the film-makers for leaving them alone.

The questions I heard most often from audiences were, "What do you believe in?", and, "What are you trying to say?" I never knew how to answer them. If I said, "The film is the answer", then I was being coy, but I hated the arrogance of saying something like, "Sharon rejects God at the end because she refuses to go along with the creator of such a dreadful universe". If I said, "I believe in peace", I sounded like a greetings card. At the New York Film Festival press screening, I was asked a question about the movie's view of religion, and I got a big laugh, intentionally, when I said, to get out of the harsh light, "Well, I live in California". Later, a critic denounced the film, resorting to the French for his assistance, when he said, "As the French would say, the film is *très très Californie*".

Was I trying to make a spiritual film, or a film about spirituality? And I heard the word all the time, but what do we really mean by 'spiritual'?

It's obvious, and correct, to cite Bresson as a spiritual film-maker, but by that, do we mean that he increases our feelings of compassion, defuses our violence, and guides us to self-sacrifice, an end to materialism, jealousy, and greed? Or can we find something awful in the implications of a spirituality whose only goal is a kind of useless revelation, some glimpse into an eternity terrifying in its indifference to our moral lives? And if eternity is not indifferent, if in our daily lives, in our pettiest decisions, we hold the cosmos in the balance, each of us, then the effect of seeing a spiritual film would have to be nothing less than dedication to the practice of complete attention to every consequence. So a movie would have to be part of a ritual, acting out a human drama that brought everyone to a point of attention where we could resonate with the angels. Or would a spiritual cinema lead to social action that was effective without violence? Or would a spiritual cinema lead to a self-consciousness that caused people whose actions were evil to see them in a clear light? For example, if someone, after seeing *The Player*, fulfils a vow to return all phone calls, and by that little discipline lessens the anxiety in the lives of the people waiting for his calls, would that make the film spiritual?

Some movies appeal to some of us, but we can't explain why. What is it about the ending to Antonioni's *The Eclipse* (1962) that's so beautiful? (If you agree with me, and think that it is.) We see something, we feel something. But when I saw Spielberg's *Close Encounters of the Third Kind* (1980) for the first time, I thought then that I was seeing God. Now this embarrasses me, but at the time I was suffused with feelings of awe. Later I saw Fassbinder's *Fear Eats the Soul* (1973), and knew that if I wasn't seeing God, I was getting a peek into something that reflected Him, but if I say why, I'll start sounding like a Californian. So I'd better stop.

With more than forty films and a reputation for forging legends about himself, Fassbinder was an extraordinary figure in German cinema. Wallace Watson reflects on his achievements on the tenth anniversary of his death

THE BITTER TEARS OF

RWE



The prodigal son: Rainer Werner Fassbinder, an outsider in his lifetime, now has the blessing of official German culture

For six weeks this summer, around the tenth anniversary of his death at the age of thirty-seven on 10 June 1982, the remarkable achievements of Rainer Werner Fassbinder as “poet, player, and film-maker” are being celebrated in Berlin – where the German Film and Television Academy twice turned down his application for admission some twenty-five years ago. There will be screenings of all forty-four of his films and more than sixty other movies that were of special interest to him; a twenty-room exhibition of scripts, production equipment, photographs and related artefacts; and eight panel discussions by former colleagues.

Sponsored by the Rainer Werner Fassbinder Foundation, a non-profit-making agency which Fassbinder's mother, Liselotte Eder, established in 1987 to manage her son's legacy, the programme is also supported by the Deutsche Filmmuseum (Frankfurt-am-Main) and the Stiftung Deutsche Kinemathek (Berlin), with additional assistance from two dozen businesses, corporations, and government departments, including the federal Interior Ministry and the Brandenburg Ministry of Science, Research and Culture. There is some irony in this broadly supported posthumous tribute to a film-maker whose personal life and artistic production so insistently challenged German mainstream culture.

Fassbinder's films probe relentlessly beneath the repressed surfaces of individual lives and the deceptive ‘normality’ of modern social and political arrangements, to reveal oppression and exploitation in many forms, in both personal and public spheres. This is not so bleak as it may sound, for often the films offer ironic humour (which his critics tend to overlook) or even what he sometimes spoke of as “utopian” alternatives.

His films considerably expanded the language of cinema, as he tried out radically different means for various thematic and artistic ends. Fassbinder was an unusually disciplined and sure-handed director, who carefully sketched out most of his shots in advance. And he worked fast, typically omitting rehearsals and going with his first take. The result is that, though his total body of work is extraordinarily rich in cinematic texture and form, not one of his films is quite a perfect masterpiece. There is in this something of Godard's distaste for polish, perhaps more Fassbinder's impatience to move on to the next (usually substantially different) project.

German Hollywood

The sheer magnitude of Fassbinder's productivity, in a professional career that lasted less than fifteen years, is astonishing: thirty-five feature-length films, two television series (shot on film), three short films, four video productions, twenty-four stage plays and four radio plays directed, and thirty-six acting roles in his own and others' films. Seen from this distance, his full and varied professional career divides roughly into four major phases (excluding two short films of 1966 and 1967).

For a year and a half starting in late summer 1967 (at age twenty-two), he was a potent force

in Munich's underground theatre, working with a group of friends and intimates of both sexes who gathered around him, first in the Action-Theater and then under the name of 'antiteater'. This aggressively left-wing and anti-traditional theatrical work is fascinating in its own right, as well as being crucial to the formation of Fassbinder's consciousness of himself as an artist and to the development of his directorial style.

His career as a film director began in April 1969, in what his colleague Harry Baer has called a "marathon" apprenticeship. Over the next twenty months, the antiteater group, under Fassbinder's increasingly dominant direction, produced no fewer than eleven feature-length films, of amazing variety: three gangster films (set in contemporary Munich, evoking American and French models), escapist and anachronistic fantasies, a dark satire of contemporary middle-class life, and movie versions of three altogether different antiteater stage productions.

An eight-month respite from film-making began in December 1970. During this time Fassbinder, inspired by the Hollywood melodramas of German-American director Douglas Sirk, determined to move away from private, "onanistic" films "made for myself and my friends" and to start to make "German Hollywood film" – melodramas with wide public appeal which he hoped would probe the prevailing ideologies of post-war West Germany. They were to have the cinematic polish of Sirkean melodrama, but with more critical bite than Sirk's films, which Fassbinder found intelligent and sympathetic, but only mildly subversive.

Fassbinder lived up to his intentions in the five-year period that followed, producing a number of widely accessible melodramas about individuals trapped within systems whose oppressive mechanisms they internalise. Their stories are filmed for the most part in classical Hollywood cinematic style, though all of them quietly but insistently work against the grain of that 'dominant' cinema through such alienating devices as obtrusively stylised framing, parodic use of music and unconventional angles, lighting and continuity cutting.

Many of these films explore sociological themes – for example, bourgeois prejudice against the working class (*The Merchant of Four Seasons*, and, in a gay context, *Fox and His Friends*); lower-middle-class intergenerational conflict (*Wild Game*); and prejudice against foreign 'guest-workers' (*Fear Eats the Soul*). They have much in common with Fassbinder's 1972 five-episode working-class television series, *Eight Hours Are Not a Day*, though that series was deliberately more straightforward and optimistic, aimed as it was at a mass television audience (see Rayns, p.85). Several Fassbinder melodramas of this first half of the 70s – including *The Bitter Tears of Petra von Kant*, *Martha*, *Fear of Fear*, *Nora Helmer* (a version of the antiteater staging of Ibsen's *A Doll's House*) and *Effi Briest* (adapted from the novel by Theodor Fontane) – evoke the Hollywood 'women's pictures' made by Sirk and others in the 40s and 50s.

The final phase of Fassbinder's short career

began about 1976. There was a marked increase in psychological and ideological intensity, and what Wolfram Schütte has described (in understatement) as "an increasingly complex system of multiple aesthetic codes" (*Reihe Film*, p.66). More than half of these later films were international co-productions, and their casts consisted increasingly of established professional actors (some of them international stars).

We see in this last period a new emphasis on childhood oppression (*Chinese Roulette*, *I Only Want You to Love Me*, *In a Year with 13 Moons*) and on the exploitative – even deadly – nature of sexual intimacy in explicitly gay contexts (*13 Moons* and *Querelle*). The 'women's picture' of the early 70s now becomes a vehicle for probing not only personal issues, but also the cultural and political history of modern Germany: the Weimar era in *The Station Master's Wife*; the Second World War in *Lili Marleen*; that war and the 'economic miracle' in *The Marriage of Maria Braun*; corruption in the Federal Republic in *Veronika Voss* and *Lola*. Contemporary radical politics are translated into intense personal dramas in *Mother Küster's Journey to Heaven*, *The Third Generation*, and Fassbinder's contribution to the collaborative film *Germany in Autumn*. Many of these public and private themes are included in his most ambitious project, and his masterpiece, the fourteen-part television series, *Berlin Alexanderplatz*.

Personal attacks

Fassbinder's reputation as a film artist has suffered considerably from inordinate fascination with his personal life and sometimes near-hysterical reactions to the disturbing political implications (sexual and otherwise) of his films and plays. In general, his work has been received more enthusiastically abroad than at home, particularly after *Maria Braun* projected him in 1978 into international awareness as the *Wunderkind* of the newly discovered New German Cinema. The late 70s saw major Fassbinder retrospectives in Paris, London and New York, and big crowds turned out for three- and four-day screenings of *Berlin Alexanderplatz* in several countries.

At home, Fassbinder's reputation was entangled almost continually in controversy. There were frequent exposés of his lifestyle in the boulevard press, and attacks from all sides from groups his films offended. His television series *Eight Hours* was cut from eight to five episodes after pressure from conservatives. The playwright Franz Xaver Kroetz sued over alleged obscenity in *Wild Game* (based on a play of his). Lesbians and feminists accused Fassbinder of misogyny (in presenting women as complicit in their own oppression) in his 'women's pictures'. Gays complained of misrepresentation in *Fox and His Friends*. Rightists attacked him for his associations with the radical left. Marxists said he had sold out his political principles in his sardonic depictions of left-intellectual manipulations in *Mother Küster's Journey to Heaven* and of late-blooming terrorists in *The Third Generation*. *Berlin Alexanderplatz* was moved to a late-night television slot amid widespread complaints that it was unsuitable for children. The most heated criti-

cism came in response to Fassbinder's play, *Garbage, the City, and Death*, whose scheduled performance at the Theater am Turm (TAT) in Frankfurt was cancelled early in 1975 amid charges of anti-Semitism. In the turmoil, Fassbinder resigned from his directorship of that prestigious theatre complex, bitterly complaining about what he considered misinterpretation of the play (which he characterised as neo-anti-Semitism). As late as 1985, controversy over the planned staging of the play in Frankfurt caused major diplomatic reverberations in Bonn and Tel Aviv.

Fassbinder certainly did little to discourage the personalised nature of the attacks on himself and his work. He seemed to invite it, in fact, by his aggressively anti-bourgeois lifestyle – symbolised in his black leather jacket, battered hat, dark glasses and the provocatively paunchy mid-section of his later years – and in the various ways he acted out in public the role of a super-genius who could be as ugly and as spiteful as he wanted.

Exploring the self

It is perhaps not surprising that Fassbinder criticism has so often focused on his personal history. The films – with their searing revelations of the exploitative potential of intimate relationships and their intensely personal approaches to political and ideological issues – seem to invite autobiographical criticism. Many of them point clearly to what he called his "childhood that was no childhood at all" (in which he scarcely knew his parents as such), to his outsider status as a homosexual, or to his political views as a member of the disillusioned left-radical 'generation of '68'. And he spoke to interviewers with surprising candour about his opinions on public issues, his problematic personality (alternately aggressive and painfully shy, hungry for companionship but psychologically isolated) and even his self-abuse through alcohol, drugs and overwork.

Fassbinder also inspired speculation about himself and his personal relationships through his practice of giving film roles to friends, lovers, ex-lovers and his mother – and through his own frequent appearances in his films. Even his cameo and minor roles are often pointedly self-referential. In the major parts he gave himself (mostly in relatively early films), Fassbinder clearly seems to be projecting and exploring aspects of his own (real or imagined) self – as Franz, the alienated and depressed protagonist of *Love Is Colder than Death*; as Jorgos, the social outcast in *Katzelmacher*; as the exploited working-class gay in *Fox and His Friends*. The tense intersection of the public and private aspects of his personality is most dramatically visible in his remarkable contribution to the collaborative film *Germany in Autumn* where, playing himself, he bullies his real-life mother and his real-life lover Armin Meier for their reactionary political attitudes during the terrorist hysteria, and weeps into the telephone, holding his genitals like a distressed, helpless baby.

As Fassbinder made clear in a long essay he wrote on *Berlin Alexanderplatz*, Alfred Döblin's 1929 novel (which he carried around for years before he was able to make his film adapt- ►



Divided selves: Dirk Bogarde and Andréa Ferréol in 'Despair', a study of the breakdown of a decadent White Russian aesthete

ation of it) had been crucial for him in coming to terms with his homosexuality, and he closely identified with the novel's long-suffering (and sometimes abusive) protagonist Franz Biberkopf – whose name and character-type reappear often in his films. (Along with American director, Raoul Walsh, Biberkopf inspired Fassbinder's pseudonym as film-cutter, 'Franz Walsch'.) In the fourteen-part adaptation of the novel that Fassbinder was finally able to make in 1979/80, he turned Döblin's text, an ironic, experimental blend of 'documentary' and stream-of-consciousness narratives, into a deeply subjective, melodramatic (even romanticised) but naturalistic narrative. The mind-blowing surrealism of the epilogue, 'My Dream of Franz Biberkopf's Dream', is another matter, stylistically speaking.

Two significant instances of self-referentiality in Fassbinder's work are films marking major transitional points in his career, both of which dramatise artists in crisis. The antiteater group's apprenticeship in movie-making culminated in *Beware of a Holy Whore* (filmed in September 1970), a stylish, remarkably candid portrayal of Fassbinder as tyrannical film direc-

tor. Based on the group's self-lacerating experience in making *Whity* five months earlier, this film shows clearly how the antiteater's collective ideal had given way to the power of the ensemble's aggressive but vulnerable director (played by an actor wearing Fassbinder's trademark black leather jacket). The second transitional film is the anarchic black comedy *Satan's Brew* (1976), which, as Wolfgang Limmer has pointed out (*October*, p.22), marks Fassbinder's passage from the more public melodramas of the early 70s to his darker, more complex final period. In this case, the artist on the verge of a nervous breakdown is a megalomaniacal poet who discovers to his horror that he has plagiarised his masterpiece from the early twentieth-century neo-romantic poet Stefan George (Fassbinder had recently been accused of plagiarising the plot of *Martha*).

Many commentators, including Fassbinder himself, have pointed out less obvious autobiographical references in most of his films – such as *Petra von Kant* (which Fassbinder once said was derived from "a particular relationship of mine"), *I Only Want You to Love Me* (which seems to refer to the neglect he suffered as a child),

Chinese Roulette (featuring a verbal cruelty game that Fassbinder inflicted on his friends), and particularly *13 Moons*. This last is a complex study of sado-masochism, recounting (largely in flashback) the life of a badly abused transsexual who was raised as a boy by a nun (played by Fassbinder's mother in one of her most substantial roles). Fassbinder took personal responsibility for virtually all aspects of the film's production, claiming it was his penance for the pain he had caused his former lover, Armin Meier, the apparent victim of a suicide several weeks after Fassbinder had broken off with him. If ever a film cried out for an autobiographical-psychological interpretation, this one does – and several perceptive critics have risen to the bait.

There are, of course, considerable risks in approaching Fassbinder's films with his personal history in mind. Some commentators, especially in earlier years, have been content simply to identify parallels, in rather reductive fashion. And autobiographical approaches fly in the face of trends in contemporary critical theory, which downplays the significance of the auteur not only as an autonomous and conscious creator of aesthetic artefacts, but as a locus of critical interest, among competing systems of ideological and rhetorical significance. I would urge, however, that Fassbinder's forceful, divided and insistently self-questioning personal character poses a serious challenge to proclamations about the death of the auteur. There is no doubt that his films provoke important questions about the relation of the creative artist (as both a subjective and a social self) to his or her artistic production.

In exploring the autobiographical dimensions of Fassbinder's films, we should recall his own warnings against interpreting them too narrowly and literally as documents of his life: "I have to deal with everything that I experience in one way or another, in order to have the feeling that I've really experienced it"; "I think I am fairly interesting. The films I make are more interesting". And he often spoke of his work as a means of dealing with his inner turmoil and depression, indeed as a substitute for psychotherapy.

Many critics have emphasised the need to understand Fassbinder's films as deliberately formulated components of a self-created legend, of "the great production that is named Rainer Werner Fassbinder", in Harry Baer's wry phrase. Michael Töteberg helpfully suggests that we approach Fassbinder's self-projections in the various embodiments of Franz Biberkopf as we do Joseph Conrad's Marlow, as a distancing alter-ego (*RWF. Kinofilme 1*, 1987, pp.20-21). And Jane Shattuc, in an article in a special issue of *Wide Angle* (1990) devoted to Fassbinder, shrewdly distinguishes "the confessional Fassbinder" of the "art" films from "the bourgeois Fassbinder" of the works aimed at television audiences.

Reading 'Despair'

Undaunted by my own warnings, I would like now to explore an 'autobiographical' reading of *Despair*, Fassbinder's 1977 adaptation of Vladimir Nabokov's novel (1934, ► page 28

FASSBINDER BOGARDE LETTERS

● Rainer Werner Fassbinder completed the filming of *Despair* on 20 June 1977, in a small hotel near Lubeck, in northern Germany. Then he retired to his room, leaving the film's star, Dirk Bogarde (Hermann Hermann), to host the crew party in the hotel bar. During the evening Fassbinder slipped under Bogarde's door a one-page handwritten note in slightly awkward English. Bogarde responded four days later from his home in France, offering praise and encouragement, and urging Fassbinder to take control of his personal life.

Three months later (on 24 September), having seen the cut of the film accepted for Cannes the following spring, Bogarde wrote to Fassbinder again, expressing his pride in the film and his pleasure at having had the opportunity to work with Fassbinder on it. The three letters are published here for the first time.

Bogarde has indicated in a letter to me that he was profoundly disappointed when he saw the film at Cannes in May. He believes that in the intervening time Fassbinder had cut the film substantially. However, this is disputed by Julianne Lorenz, who worked with Fassbinder in editing the film down to its present, approximately two-hour length (he agreed to cut a final twenty minutes from the film only when the producers insisted on it). Further research is needed on this point. W.W.

These letters are published here with the permission of Sir Dirk Bogarde, The Mugar Memorial Library of Boston University [RWF to DB, 20.6.77], Liselotte Eder, Julianne Lorenz, and the Rainer Werner Fassbinder Foundation, and with the assistance of the Deutsche Kinemathek, Berlin.

20 June 1977

Lieber Dirk,
please excuse this letter, but at the moment I can't speak about the things, which happen in my head. But I want to thank you. I thank you for the Hermann you made possible for me and I hope, it will be our Hermann like his madness is a little bit our madness – and I thank you for the things I couldn't learn from you, things I never learned before. I thank you, that you gave me your authority without making fear, because fear makes sick, and normally authority goes together with fear, but you did show me a way how to combine authority with freedom, which I knew so far only theoretically and what is one of the most important ideas for work and life.

More than likely there is more despair than anything else. But – and that is what I think – life is timeless and end is endless. And this means, it is not so sad like it seems.

Danke
Rainer Werner Fassbinder

24 June 1977

My dear Rainer
Forgive me that I type this to you instead of writing to you in my own hand... you would never be able to read it I fear, and it is important that you read what I want to say to you. After all, we have never been able to 'speak' to each other, so I must take the chance of writing.

Your absence at the Farewell Party of course saddened me... you are the Boss and you were expected by us all... however I didn't expect you myself, for I know you just a little bit now, and I knew that you would perhaps not have the special kind of courage needed for that sort of evening! However your letter gave me great happiness as well as great sadness too. Paradox? Perhaps.

I suppose I have never worked ever with anyone before who had a 'Death Wish'... and being a very adventurous, curious, believing kind-of-person myself, I find it very difficult to understand. Although, God knows, I do understand the atmosphere in Germany after only three months' stay... it cannot be easy for a person of your age and generation to bear easily. But you must fight that terribly dangerous atmosphere... and push it aside... You say in your letter to me that "More likely there is more despair than anything else..." I assume you mean Life? That is fundamentally NOT TRUE! Life is full of hope and promise.

A minor example, if you like, is our recent work together. Nabokov, the odd Mr Stoppard... myself, Andrea... all of us together with you, under your control, making a film of which we will all, I know, be tremendously proud. Sharing ideas and emotions among so many different ages and beliefs... but all united under the splendid 'umbrella' of your particular form of Genius. And that is not too strong a word. Though often misapplied. In your case I don't think that it is. I didn't actually 'learn' anything from you, I suppose... that is not important... but I hope that I was able to bring to you some of the learning or teaching which I have had from people like Cukor, Milestone, Clayton, Losey, Visconti and Resnais and the rest of them... and to SHARE that learning with someone like you is quite wonderful. To see it used and re-used, as you did, to see you 'eat', literally, the training which I brought you, was magical for me. I was simply handing on the 'baton' in this extraordinary business of the Creative Cinema. And to see you take that 'baton' is HOPE, Rainer... NOT ever despair! You must realise by now how devoted to you both Andrea and I were... and how much we respected

you and wanted to do our very, very best for you. At the beginning I admit it was far from easy and I was almost in despair myself! But we struggled on together, you and she and I, and I have no doubt whatsoever that we have made an extraordinary film together.

But we could not have done it without you... isn't that a hopeful sign? Surely? To receive, and to give, love, and trust, in work as difficult as ours takes more than despair, my dear fellow.

I have probably bored you shitless by now, with all this. Anyway you can tear it all up and I will never know.

One thing more before I go... you say in your letter that I have taught you Authority without Fear. I don't know if that is so... But did you ever realise that that is exactly what you have NOT got? You have Authority with fear... everyone, from Minx down to the Publicity Frau was shit terrified of you. And your Authority. So if I have, by any chance, taught you what it is to have it WITHOUT fear, then for God's sake use it soon! It will make your life slower, more irritating, and generally take longer. But it is well worthwhile winning. You create it wonderfully well for yourself... from your chain cap to your heavy boots... the too loud music, the too fast car... the Death Wish I suppose... but I know, and you know that all that junk really conceals a very pleasing 'soft centre' as Hermann used to say... but be careful of it. It can rebound in your face so damned easily. And with your blinding talent you really don't need too much. Just enough to keep the Front Office worried. But not too much.

The Cinema needs you very much. You have a tremendous amount to give it... there are marvellous people waiting to work with and for you... stay with us! There is so much for you to do, to give, so many roads for you to take... Life is not just one boring round of Clubs and Discos and Pills... and Pot. Use, them, of course, for the relaxation you need from time to time... but not as often as you do. Don't Live by them, or by the mindless people who exist in that world. They will only swamp you and kill you off far, far quicker than your own feelings of disillusion or so-called Despair.

As you say at the closing of your letter... "Life is not, maybe, so sad like it seems"... you are Fucking right R. W. F! Life is bloody marvellous and you should be so damned grateful that you have the youth and the brilliance to storm it.

Now I'll stop. God knows what you will make of this. I don't know. But it comes with my warmest respect and affection, and gratitude, for all the kindness you have shown me in the last few weeks, and all the security which you gave me during, for me at least, a very difficult and bewildering (at times!) assignment. It is something I will never forget and a period of time which I would never have missed for anything. Thank you.

Remember; Despair comes when

you have nothing – you have everything – and everything to gain. Affectionately

Dirk

PS Whatever you do, do *not* dub the cast in English voices. It will be disaster. D.

24 September 1977

Rainer

Now I have had time to 'digest' the film. And only now am I able to write to you clearly about it. Forgive the delay... but it is such a difficult thing to discuss a film in which you have worked and with which you have been 'so in love'.

I love the film. I am proud, immensely, of it, of you and of Andrea, Klaus and even of my own work... which I always find impossible to judge or discuss. I am, like you, never really satisfied: but this time I think that I can honestly say that you have enabled me to do my best work for the Cinema. It is not perfect. But it is the best I have done. Thank you.

Even though I saw it in black and white and in bad condition, I was immediately struck by the power it holds... and I think you have done a fantastic job in the editing. God knows what it would have been like if it had been left to Reggie Beck... who is brilliant for some people but not for you... The clips the next day in colour, however brief, made me realise the full value of the film, and I now long to see it with sound and music and titles! Bring it to Nice when it is done and let us run it at Victorine... and have a HUGE party afterwards. Before the Critics destroy us!

There is one extremely bad performance in the film which I feel sure you could safely lose... and just have voiceover for... that is the shot of poor Ossie in the post office saying "Your Pushkin Letter" it is so BAD that everyone laughed, and it is not the place, or the time, for laughter... can you cut him out? DO TRY!

Stoppard called yesterday and I was happy to be able to make him so happy... he is now convinced that we have done a marvellous film, and is very excited. I told him that he would be shocked here and there the first time around, but that he would be immeasurably proud the second time... I hope this is correct. For my part I am tremendously happy that I was asked to be in it, and proud too... and I cannot thank you for such a marvellous chance and experience. I once told you, early in the film, at Interlaken, that it was 'paradise' working with you. I don't know if you remember? But it still is true. I will follow you to Alaska if you ask me... and even if you don't, be assured that you will always have my deepest respect, gratitude, and love...

Always

Dirk

PS Try NOT to open the film in New York first. Have a Berlin OR Paris opening first – anywhere in Europe. NOT the US.

◀ revised 1965), a reading which Hans Günther Pflaum and Wolfram Schütte suggested in newspaper reviews of the film in May 1978. Such an interpretation may seem somewhat surprising, considering that this was Fassbinder's first major international production, with two international stars (Dirk Bogarde and Andréa Ferréol) in the lead roles, his only English-language film, and the first film he had directed with a script written by someone else: Tom Stoppard, no less.

Despair was produced during a period of intense self-doubt and introspection on Fassbinder's part, which apparently had its roots in the TAT fiasco (and associated charges of anti-Semitism), the increasing break-up of his 'extended family', the anti-terrorist hysteria, and the looming break-up with Armin Meier, his lover since the spring of 1974. Wolfram Schütte has identified this period as Fassbinder's "Purgatory, a far-reaching identity crisis" (*Reihe Film*, p.79). It was at about this time that Fassbinder began to talk often with interviewers about psychosomatic illness, feelings of despair, the possibility of suicide, and his need for psychotherapy. He planned to leave Germany, in part to get away from the "hysterical togetherness" of making films, so that he could write a novel, testing whether he could live and work alone. It was also at this time that he began seriously to lose control over his drug use.

He didn't leave Germany, and he didn't write the novel. Instead, probably in the summer of 1976, he started work on a screenplay based on Nabokov's *Despair*, which he had accidentally come across a few years earlier. He told Christian Braad Thomsen (in Rayns, p.99) that he interpreted the book as being about someone "at that point [in life] where not only the mind but the body too understands that it's 'all over'", someone who rejects the possibility of living "a life which consists only of repeats", but who, instead of committing suicide, "openly decides to go insane". Considering both Fassbinder's subjective state, and the subtleties of Nabokov's ironic first-person narrative, it is not surprising that he found the novel, as he said, "rather difficult and complicated to adapt to film". After several unsuccessful tries, he hired Tom Stoppard – that master of absurdity and the three-level pun, who had recently worked on the script for Joseph Losey's film *The Romantic Englishwoman* – to take over the job.

Fassbinder met with Stoppard several times while he was working on the scenario, and he told Thomsen that during the shooting he departed from the script when it suited him. And, of course, he was responsible for the sophisticated cinematic effects in this highly mannered film, and for directing Dirk Bogarde as the protagonist (in what many critics have called the most effective role of his career). Thus I think we can give Fassbinder most of the credit for the drastic change which the film makes in the presentation of Hermann, the protagonist of the story.

In both novel and film, Hermann is a sophisticated, somewhat decadent White Russian living in exile during the last years of the Weimar Republic in Berlin, where he owns a chocolate

factory. He is a witty, ironic aesthete and philosopher of sorts, who seems to love his wife Lydia in spite of the fact that she is stupid, stuffs herself with his chocolates, and is cuckolding him virtually under his nose with her cousin, a vulgar would-be artist named Ardalion. Presumably it is the pressure of these circumstances that leads Hermann to begin to experience hallucinations of split personality (part of him observing the other making love to Lydia, for example), and to imagine (wrongly) that a tramp he happens to meet is his exact double. After elaborate planning (including the purchase of a large life insurance policy), Hermann dresses the tramp Felix in his own clothes and murders him, thinking he can escape with Lydia and the insurance money to a more comfortable life (away from Ardalion) under a new identity away from Germany. He almost pulls this off, in spite of his mistake about Felix's appearance, since no one knows the identity of the dead man, and he is passing as Felix. But he has made a stupid error: he failed to carry away Felix's walking cane, which has Felix's name on it. After the police find that, it is only a matter of time before they arrest Hermann in his hideout.

The novel's Hermann generates considerable reader sympathy at first, speaking as the author of the clever, allusive book we are reading – a text rich in echoes of the aesthetic-decadent-modernist traditions of European literature. He comes close to convincing us, in fact, that his murder of Felix was an exquisite work of art, with no moral consequences whatsoever. However, the attentive reader gradually begins to see, through the gaps and inconsistencies in the intricate narrative Hermann spins, that for all his clever talk, he is a psychopathic liar who has tried to hide from the reader (and himself, perhaps) the vulgar truth that he murdered Felix just to collect on his new life insurance policy. In the novel's final chapter, Hermann unwittingly damns himself in the reader's eyes by reading a letter from Ardalion (a letter he mistakenly assumes the reader will find as absurd as he does), which characterises him as "a blackguard and bully... a great grisly wild boar with putrid tusks". But by this point the reader is quite prepared to agree with this moral condemnation (if not with Ardalion's particular rationale or his rhetorical style).

Divided consciousness

The Stoppard/Fassbinder film gives the novel's protagonist (Hermann Karlovich, as we learn in the penultimate chapter) a new surname, Hermann (the resulting double name is a typical Stoppard ploy, which emphasises the central *Doppelgänger* motif and recalls *Lolita's* narrator, Humbert Humbert). But by far the most profound difference from the novel is the film's extremely sympathetic attitude towards its protagonist, presenting him to the very end as a sort of existential hero whose madness seems the only respectable way out of the vulgarity and absurdity of the modern world (including the onset of the Nazi regime, which the film dwells on much more than the novel). The immorality of Hermann's cold-blooded murder

of Felix is virtually ignored in the complex explorations of his divided consciousness, which the film undertakes through brilliant visual effects and Bogarde's subtle acting.

Whereas the final chapter of the novel strongly reinforces our perception of Hermann Karlovich as a moral monster, the final sequence of the film celebrates Hermann Hermann as the hero of an absurdist tragedy. Holed up in his Swiss hotel room (where mysterious drops of water fall down on to a symbolic broken china bowl, seen in extreme close-up) our tormented protagonist completes his lonely 'Journey into Light' – the film's German subtitle, which is vividly reinforced by the lighting of this sequence. As German critic Wilhelm Roth has noted in *Reihe Film* (p.191), Hermann here evokes the isolated romantic gangster hunted by the police: "Dirk Bogarde becomes the double of Humphrey Bogart". Or, we might say, Fassbinder's Franz in *Love Is Colder than Death* or Ricky in *The American Soldier*. Given Fassbinder's state of mind at the time he made this film and his history of self-projection through such Angst-ridden characters in many of his earlier films, we are certainly justified in sensing certain aspects of the auteur in the character Bogarde embodies. This is not the occasion for pursuing the particulars of that self-projection, but I think the general outlines must be clear.

Such an 'autobiographical' reading of *Despair* can be buttressed by considering two important – and altogether different – personal relationships that figured in the film and its production. The first is Fassbinder's deteriorating bond with his lover, Armin Meier, whom he cast in three strange bit parts in the film. First, Meier plays two twin brothers in a silent crime thriller film which Hermann, his wife, and her cousin watch in a movie theatre. One brother (a cop) tries to dissuade his twin (a criminal holed up in a room during a police shoot-out) to give up. But the criminal brother murders his twin and tries to escape in police uniform. The other police at the scene see through the disguise and gun down the murderer in his brother's squad car. Immediately following that bloody little melodrama, we see Meier in his third role in the film, as a shop foreman whom Hermann encounters in the chocolate factory. They engage in this bit of tricky reflexivity:

H: I've seen you somewhere before, your face... in the cinema.

F: I never go to the cinema.

H: Don't lie to me. I know.

These juxtaposed sequences involving Armin Meier, the lover to whom Fassbinder would the next year write a pained and torturous letter of goodbye, well illustrate his practice of casting individuals in his films as a means of imaginatively exploring his intimate relations with them. It looks very much as if Fassbinder is here subjecting his troubled relationship with Armin to some rather grotesque fantasising.

The second relationship I have referred to is the one that developed between Fassbinder and Bogarde during the making of the film. Bogarde describes in his memoirs (*An Orderly Man*) his and Fassbinder's intense but largely unspoken collaboration on the film, pointing out

Filmography as director

Rainer Werner Fassbinder

b. 31 May 1946; d. 10 June 1982

Der Stadtstreicher (The City Tramp)

10 mins (1965) b/w sc

Das kleine Chaos (The Little Chaos)

9 mins (1966) b/w sc

Liebe ist kälter als der Tod

(Love Is Colder than Death)

88 mins (1969) b/w sc

Katzelmacher

88 mins (1969) b/w sc

Götter der Pest (Gods of the Plague)

91 mins (1969) b/w sc

Rio das Mortes

88 mins (1970) sc

Das Kaffeehaus (The Coffeehouse)

105 mins (1970) b/w video

Whity

95 mins (1970) sc

Die Niklashauser Fart

(The Niklashausen Journey)

86 mins (1970) sc

Der amerikanische Soldat

(The American Soldier)

80 mins (1970) b/w sc

Warnung vor einer heiligen Nutte

(Beware of a Holy Whore)

103 mins (1970) sc

Pioniere in Ingolstadt (Recruits in

Ingolstadt)

84 mins (1970)

Der Händler der vier Jahreszeiten

(The Merchant of Four Seasons)

89 mins (1971) sc

Die bitteren Tränen der Petra von Kant

(The Bitter Tears of Petra von Kant)

124 mins (1972) sc

Wildwechsel (Wild Game)

102 mins (1972)

Acht Stunden sind kein Tag (Eight Hours

Are Not a Day)

101, 100, 92, 89, 89

mins (1972) (Five Episodes)

Bremer Freiheit (Bremen Freedom)

87 mins (1972) sc with Dietrich

Lohmann; video

Welt am Draht (World on a Wire)

99, 106 minutes (two parts, 1973)

sc with Fritz Müller-Scherz

Nora Helmer

101 mins (1973)

Angst essen Seele auf (Fear Eats the

Soul)

93 mins (1973) sc

Martha

111 mins (1973) sc



Fear Eats the Soul (1973)

Fontane Effi Briest (Effi Briest)

141 mins (1972-74) b/w sc

Faustrecht der Freiheit (Fox and His

Friends)

123 mins (1974) sc

Wie ein Vogel auf dem Draht

(Like a Bird on a Wire)

44 mins (1974) sc; video

Mutter Küsters Fahrt zum Himmel

(Mother Küster's Journey to Heaven)

120 mins (1975)

sc with Kurt Raab; video

Angst vor der Angst (Fear of Fear)

88 mins (1975)

Ich will doch nur, dass ihr mich liebt

(I Only Want You to Love Me)

104 mins (1975-76)

Satansbraten (Satan's Brew)

112 mins (1976)

Chinesisches Roulette

(Chinese Roulette)

86 mins (1976)

Bolweiser (The Station Master's Wife)

104, 96 mins (1976-77);

cinema version 112 mins

Frauen in New York

(Women in New York)

111 mins (1977)

Despair: Eine Reise ins Licht (Despair)

119 mins (1978)

Deutschland im Herbst

(Germany in Autumn)

segment

26 mins (1977-78) sc

Die Ehe der Maria Braun (The Marriage

of Maria Braun)

120 mins (1978)

In einem Jahr mit 13 Monden

(In a Year with 13 Moons)

124 mins (1978) sc

Die dritte Generation (The Third

Generation)

110 mins (1978-79)

Berlin Alexanderplatz

14 parts – 1: 81 mins; 2-13: 58-59

mins; 14: 111 mins (1980)

Lili Marleen

120 mins (1980)

Lola

113 mins (1981)

Theater in Trance

91 mins (1981) sc

Die Sehnsucht der Veronika Voss

(Veronika Voss)

104 mins (1981)

Querelle – ein Pakt mit dem Teufel

(Querelle)

106 mins (1982)

Films as co-director/screenwriter only

Fernes Jamaica (Distant Jamaica)

(1969) sc

Warum läuft Herr R. Amok? (Why Does

Herr R. Run Amok?)

88 mins (1969)

d. Michael Fengler, RWF; sc:

improvisation from MF/RWF outline

Schatten der Engel (Shadows of Angels)

101 mins (1975) d. Daniel Schmid,

sc Schmid, RWF (RWF play, 'Der

Müll, die Stadt und der Tod')

'Garbage, the City, and Death')

that it was "an extraordinary experience in every way". He found the younger man similar to Luchino Visconti (with whom he had recently made *Death in Venice*) in his "knowledge of the camera... feeling for movement on the screen... 'pacing'... composition... texture" and ability to explore character. But he was profoundly disturbed by the director's aggressive outward manner and self-destructive behaviour. And he told him as much, candidly and eloquently, in the manner of a stern but affectionate father, in the first of his two letters published with this essay on page 27.

That letter was prompted by a handwritten note (also on page 27) which Fassbinder slipped under Bogarde's door during the evening of their last day of work together, before escaping to his own room to avoid the cast party. Fassbinder's note gives us a privileged glimpse into his troubled private thoughts at a critical juncture in his life. He hints at the severe problems preying on him, though he cannot talk about them with the older man. And he shows appreciation for the humaneness with which Bogarde was able to express the "authority" of his genius, without "making fear", and admits that he cannot follow that example.

Finally, Fassbinder's note to Bogarde reminds us of the extent to which his troubled and divided self figured in his portrayal of the protagonist of *Despair*: "I thank you for the Hermann you made possible for me and I hope, it will be our Hermann like his madness is a little bit our madness". The self-projection and self-analysis of the auteur may not be so obvious here as it is in all those films featuring incarnations of Franz Biberkopf, or those intense melodramas of emotional exploitation among lovers and family members, or those sardonic portraits of artists in crisis. Still, the very sympathetic dramatisation in *Despair* of the disintegration of a self under intense external and internal pressures surely articulates, in very personal ways, Fassbinder's state of mind as he moved through the most troubling crisis of his adult life into the final stage of his brief but amazingly creative career.

● Further reading: Harry Baer, *Schlafen kann ich, wenn ich tot bin* (I can sleep after I'm dead, 1982); Fassbinder, *Reihe Film 2* (1985), ed. Peter Jansen and Wolfram Schütte (1974 edition translated into English by Ruth McCormick, 1981); *Filme befreien den Kopf* (Films free up the head, 1984) and *Die Anarchie der Phantasie* (The anarchy of the imagination, 1986), edited by Michael Töteberg, which contain Fassbinder's writings and interviews (most of which will be re-issued later this year by Johns Hopkins UP in an English translation by Leo Lensing); Tony Rayns, *Fassbinder* (1976, rev. 1980), a volume of essays and interviews; special Fassbinder issues of three journals: *October* (1982), *Text + Critic* (1989), and *Wide Angle* (1990). There are two biographies of Fassbinder in English, Ronald Hayman's *Fassbinder: Film Maker* and Robert Katz and Peter Berling's *Love Is Colder than Death: The Life and Times of Rainer Werner Fassbinder*; both emphasise personal matters, drawing substantially from former colleagues' recollections which apparently are not always dependable.



The Marriage of Maria Braun (1978)



Dusan Makavejev, the major Yugoslav director, talks to Rod Stoneman

INNOCENCE UNPROTECTED

● Rod Stoneman: Are you still a Yugoslav film-maker?

Dusan Makavejev: When they threw me out of Yugoslavia about twenty years ago [under pressure from Brezhnev, the Yugoslav politburo viewed W. R. – *Mysteries of the Organism* on 15 February 1973; Makavejev left the next day] I became an international film-maker, though I have always considered myself Yugoslavian. I was very proud when my Australian film [*The Coca Cola Kid*, 1985] was called a Yugoslavian film in a Chicago paper. And my Swedish film [*Montenegro*, 1981] was called Yugoslavian by some critics: people always seem to read my films that way. The Oxford Film Dictionary describes me as a typical Serbian surrealist black humourist, though I don't know if this really is a Serbian tradition, or if it's just Belgrade, which is a very cosmopolitan and oppositional city. If I remember rightly, your 'Innocence Unprotected' ('Nevinost Bez Zastite', 1968) is constructed around extracts from a film of the same title: the first Serbian feature film ever made.

The original *Innocence Unprotected* was made clandestinely in 1942, under the occupation. The protagonist was from a part of Serbia that is half illiterate and he speaks with a lot of mistakes: a real Serbian *il primitivo*. But if you understand that Tito was a Croatian *il primitivo* from a very poor part of Croatia who also wasn't very literate and didn't speak correctly, you will realise that my Aleksić, who is *il primitivo* from Serbia, became a metaphor for Tito. Most people recognised this primitive man who is so full of himself, who is always the hero, who is on top.

Do you see your own work in a different light now – given that it was made within a certain phase of Yugoslavian culture and history, and during the last year that history has been dramatically rewritten? At the time it was my political commitment that was creating these films, but now I am much more aware of their formal beauty and qualities. I was aware that they were perceived with curiosity or love or passion, but what stays in films is structure. When you are working on a film, you don't think about it, it's like a silk worm producing silk. The worm doesn't think about technology: it probably has an impulse to get rid of something and so gets rid of it.

But this formal process is not completely unconscious or outside history: the montage work of your early films such as 'Innocence Unprotected' and 'Man is Not a Bird' ('Corek Nije Tica', 1965) was very much to do with the moment in cinema history in which they were produced.

Moving between the two levels of meaning – the official level and the private level – I did a lot of formal work that I was always aware of. I remember that my main pleasure was always editing the films, getting the proper rhythm, the counterpoints, the getting it all together. Yet at the time when I was working, I was

mainly thinking that I was contributing to political film.

In a film like 'The Switchboard Operator' ('Ljubavni Slucaj', 1967) there is a tension between emancipation and oppression at both a sexual and a political level. Now the specific political structures that your satire was directed at have changed significantly and are crumbling.

It seems to me that all our history has been taken away from us. Now we are discovering that most of our history of the last half-century was in fact a big cardboard construction: it's as if the whole country and everybody was moving through a strange kind of amusement park. In the 60s and 70s the point of view of your films was libertarian, suggesting that some of the more calcified structures of the Yugoslavian version of 'currently existing socialism' could be undermined from within by popular desire. Did you ever imagine that round that corner all the old nationalisms would be released? No, I never imagined what is happening now. It is an absolutely new nightmare – not a nightmare I could have dreamt up. Yet what is incredible is that aspects of it are very familiar, things I remember from my childhood and the massacres of the Second World War.

Dragan Klaic, who used to work in the theatre in Belgrade and is now in the Netherlands, described in an article how angry and sad he was that the conflict had destroyed a very fluid and productive multi-cultural situation. In the different theatres in Split, Dubrovnik, and Belgrade, actors, directors and writers from all cultures mixed. To what extent was that true of Yugoslav cinema?

It was the same, absolutely. The theatre Klaic is describing was called 'KPGT', which is made up of the initial letters of the words for theatre in the four languages of Yugoslavia: K is Kazaliste (Croatian), P is Pozoriste (Serbian), G is Gledalisce (Slovenian), T is Teatar (Macedonian). In KPGT there was a kind of culture that is absolutely European.

But in retrospect, though this was perhaps an interesting interaction for the cultural elite, it didn't dissolve the deeper differences or ancient enmities.

I wouldn't say that this was just for a cultural elite, though we did constitute more of an alternative culture that grew largely from '68. Official theatre culture was very nationalistic and was run by people who were quite dumb and quite provincial. It was the same in Belgrade, Zagreb, Ljubljana: people who were aggressively, passionately nationalistic and whose idea of culture is quantity. They believe that the culture of the dead is more important than the culture of the living, that it is more honourable to be dead than to be alive. Now they have managed to get all these nations to fight by claiming that wherever there is a Serbian grave is Serbia, wherever there is a Croatian grave is Croatia. So they are actually fighting for graveyards. But you can also find Serbian graves in Texas.

Do you have a strong Serbian identity?

I have both Yugoslavian and Serbian identities: many Croats are also bicultural, but Serbs are always so.

In terms of casting and acting, are your films entirely Serbian films, or do they involve people from the different cultures inside Yugoslavia?

I enjoyed having people from marginal,

slightly different cultures. I drew from the guest-worker culture in Sweden for the gypsies or Serbs in Montenegro, for instance. In *The Switchboard Operator*, the female lead is a Hungarian girl, a girl from the north, and the male protagonist is a Muslim. There are not too many Muslims in Belgrade, but there are 70,000 Albanians – they are totally invisible because they are construction workers and garbage collectors – and there are some Muslims from Bosnia. Because Muslims have an incredible sense of cleanliness, I liked the idea that my rat exterminator in the film should be a Muslim.

Have your films been shown on television in Yugoslavia?

Innocence Unprotected was screened recently in Belgrade, and in 1990 they showed *W. R. – Mysteries of the Organism* [*W. R. – Misterije Organizma*, 1971] without a single cut, just a lively discussion beforehand. Unlike Channel 4 here, where I had to cover certain things and scenes with goldfish and such like! Now television in the newly independent Slovenia is preparing a retrospective of all eight of my films.

What is being shown on Yugoslav television now?

So this is the new democracy! In Croatia there is total censorship and lots of people can't speak up. They say there is a war, so they need unity; it's highly cynical and very stupid. Serbia is probably more democratic, but that's more as a result of the chaos, it's because they can't control it. Television in Belgrade is controlled by rotten, corrupted people who speak a language straight from Goebbels. For example, you hear them on television saying, "the beastly Croats are slaughtering our children" – it's a fascist, Nazi language. And in Croatia they are saying, "Serbian barbarians are burning our villages". The language is such that I believe that the television and newspapers are responsible for at least half the dead on both sides. And because it's so inflammatory, people get excited and moved and then volunteer to go and kill. Once the same footage of an atrocity was used and labelled "dead Serbs" by one side and "dead Croats" by the other. It's unbelievable.

The sad irony is that this situation in which a cinema which is able to doubt or to think critically is most needed is also a situation in which that cinema is completely pushed aside.

People from the cinema are not even allowed to work on television.

What kind of films would you like to make now?

I would like to continue with experimental and radical work, but I'm aware of conservative trends in the world – we're not supposed to be making waves now. I'm looking for more narrative and fairytale-like forms of expression, but keeping the paradoxical shifts and twists that I like, making incongruities work, but now in dialogue and characters, rather than through the montage of documentary elements.

Has there been an exodus of film-makers from Yugoslavia?

The great brain drain is already happening – scientists, writers, film-makers. Zafranovic left Zagreb, Grilic is in LA and may not return. Lazak Stojanovic and Kranovic stay in the US. The playwright Dusan Kovacevic is in Budapest to escape the Serbian draft.

Goran Gocić writes from Belgrade about television coverage of the war – and about the political use of film

In time of civil war

● The Croatian victory in the recent media war, as opposed to the Serbian triumphs on the battlefield, embody national stereotypes whereby Croatia is famed for its Westernised culture and Serbia for its military heroism. As the first to understand the importance of television in the media war, and taking advantage of the fact that all Eurovision exchange had to go via their capital, the Croats quickly made sure that their programmes were compatible with Western standards. It is a strategy that worked: it is the familiarity of the structure, not the content, that decides whose story is perceived as more convincing.

This is obvious from analysing Yugoslav newsreels from the 50s and 60s, which have just been re-shown on the local Belgrade television station, Studio B. They all follow the same format: 1. Official visits to Yugoslavia by Tito's pals (the Shah of Iran, Haile Selassie, Khrushchev, Nasser *et al* accompanied by 'heroic' music, e.g. Tchaikovsky's Piano Concerto No.1); 2. The music changes to the 'trivial' (Benny Goodman) as the camera descends into the world of labour, the common people, popular trends (this is the shortest, least important part); 3. Sport, which means football, which means Yugoslav soccer victories. The moral is that collective national feeling develops and unity can be put into practice.

The structure of current Yugoslav television news (or TV Serbia today) derives directly from these newsreels. And a similar schema is noticeable in most Eastern European countries: the political course may have changed, but not the structure of governing. The media space left empty by cutting short socialist didacticism has been filled by similarly represented views of religion and statements by church officials. The people making these programmes are the same ones who made television for the past regimes: on TV Serbia, the same speakers' voices now preach a different testimony, resulting, hardly surprisingly, in a certain scepticism among many viewers.

Changing political menus

This transition from atheism to religious dogmatism has been dealt with in films such as *Time of Miracles* (*Vreme cuda*, 1989) by Goran Paskaljević in Serbia and *In the Middle of my Days* (*U sredini mojih dana*, 1988) by Jakov Sedlar in Croatia. A complete retrospective of the works of Andrei Tarkovsky (who can be read as the most significant Orthodox Christian filmmaker) on TV Serbia in March/April is the high-quality side of the same tendency. In his latest feature *Tito and I* (*Tito i ja*, 1992) set in the 50s, writer/director Goran Markovic used old newsreel material with the story of a boy who adored Tito in an attempt to launch an idea of 'collective infantilism'. But the political and historical instability of the country means that

the war film is the most powerful genre within domestic cinema. Planned for 1992 in Serbia is Zivojin Pavlović's *Deserter* (*Dezerter*).

Croatian film and television has proved extremely sensitive in adjusting to the daily political menu. The recent 'Week of Croatian film' included *Time of Warriors* (*Vreme ratnika*) by Dejan Sorak, reportedly "Southern Comfort in Croatian manner", and Drinko Ogresta's *Fragments* (*Krhotine*), memories of a man whose father was forceably drafted and afterwards branded as Ustasha.

While Croatia hoped for recognition, all eyes were turned to the US. Croatian television responded with a blitz of old Hollywood. After Germany pronounced its favourable political initiative, a ban on "all films which show Germany in an unfavourable light" was introduced. The other side counter-attacked by showing Eisenstein's *Alexander Nevsky* (1938) on television, Chiaureli's *The Vow* (*Kliatva*, 1946) in the Cinematheque and *The Funny Side of History* (1991, under the pseudonym T. Kuguar) in the theatre. All three are anti-Nazi to the point of caricature, the last two presenting Hitler as a clown who can't even pronounce long words. Tito (a Croat) always came across well 'live' or on film and television – he knew how to strike poses, but he wasn't very articulate. The royalist leader, Mihajlović (a Serb) didn't have such presence, but was a Sorbonne scholar. In McLuhan's terminology, the visual age won.

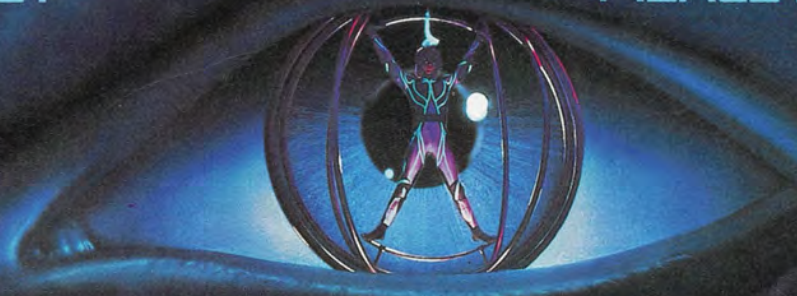
A style of one's own

It is interesting to see how the identities developed by the various television channels mirror the emerging political pluralism. While at the beginning, Serbian television stations were more or less exact replicas of each other, they soon developed their own styles. This is apparent even within popular culture: for example, in the case of foreign music videos, the Third channel promotes those of Anglo-Saxon origin (seen on MTV), while Studio B favours visually – if not aurally – the more refined products of the French MCM television station. TV Politika plays pop archive classics, while TV Serbia broadcasts material from concerts held in Belgrade. Croatian television has enriched the genre with a couple of propaganda music videos.

The Yugoslav nations have probably learned more about each other during the last two years of fighting than in the previous fifty under the communist 'brotherhood and unity' slogans. What Western onlookers (as well as 'observers') often fail to understand is that the nations which made up Yugoslavia – the Slovenians, Croats and Serbs – never lived through a period of national statehood. It is impossible to miss out a layer of history, as Russia and the many other countries that are now back to the drawing board are painfully experiencing. The disbelief of the war-stricken, and the favourite dilemma of Yugoslavian intellectuals (both in 1942 and 1992), focuses on the obvious question: what has happened to our country? As it took one war and fifty years to find out what happened in the 40s, it might take another fifty years (and perhaps one more war) to be sure about what's happening now.

JEFF FAHEY

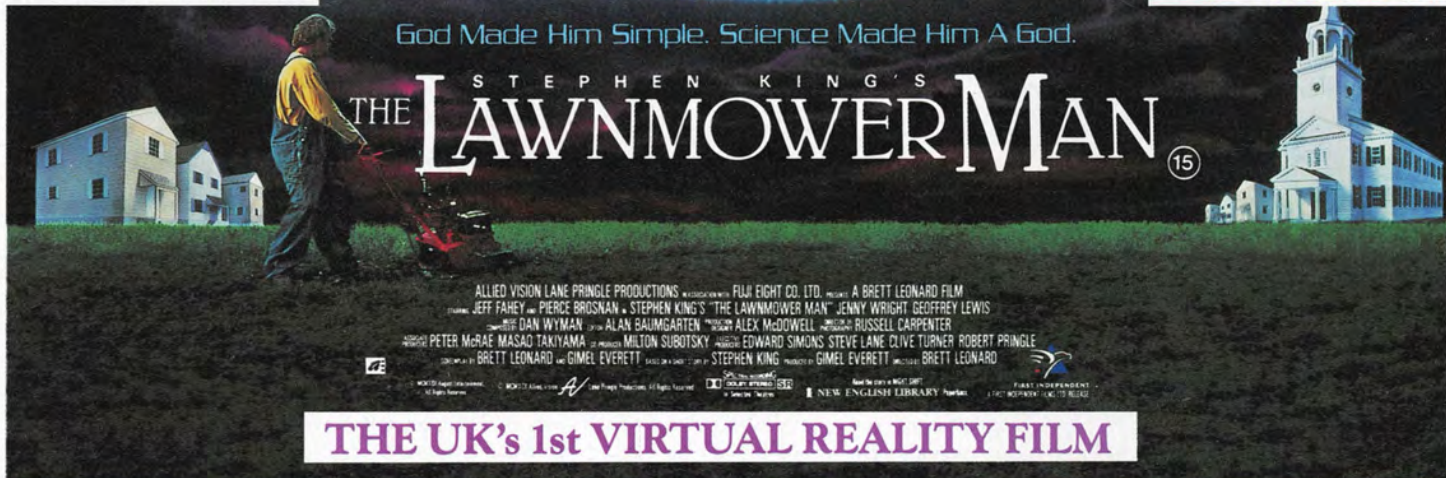
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B is for Budd Boetticher

My father was the most organised man I have ever known. He was a GP on the Yorkshire coast and, despite a town and country round each day of many miles and many visits, if he said he would be back at one o'clock, at one o'clock there he would be. He was a passionate musician and his large classical record collection was meticulously numbered and catalogued in a book which my mother still uses every day. He was also a keen cinemagoer. He used to go once and often twice a week and, being my father, kept a little book about that too. Every Sunday he would enter the titles of the new films and against each would place one, two or three stars based on the opinions of the *Observer's* film critic, C.A. Lejeune. There was a column for his own starred estimate and space for a very brief comment. I would love to look through the book now, but of course, being my father, he threw it away without sentimentality when he thought it no longer of any use. One thing I do remember is his response to *The African Queen*. He was a great fan of Katharine Hepburn, but after Lejeune's three-star recommendation he just entered his own disillusioned blob of disappointment, followed by two words... "Oh Dear!" (personally I've always thought John Huston an overrated director and perhaps the seed of that judgment was sown in my father's book).

Unfortunately, as is often the way, I have resisted much of my father's neatness, punctuality and sense of order, but, as is also often the way, when I first discovered my own passion for the cinema I found myself following his example. The year was 1960 and I was half way through a degree course at Trinity College, Dublin. It was there that I met by chance that very rare thing in those days, a postgraduate film student, over on a visit from the Slade College of Art in London. His name was Charles Barr. Later he was to publish exemplary studies of Laurel and Hardy and Ealing Studios, but at the time he was in the middle of writing a thesis on Cinemascope. He was the first person I had ever met who had seen a film ten times. I couldn't believe it. And the film in question was not a 'serious' European art house movie, but *The James Brothers* (1957), a Western directed by Nicholas Ray.

It was a revelation, both for me and a close friend, Peter Bell. Very soon Peter and I were on our way to see two more Westerns, *Ride Lonesome* (1959) and *Comanche Station* (1959), directed by someone I'd never heard of, Budd Boetticher. They were wonderful. A new world was opening up and we realised that we were not living in a cultural backwater of movie Europe, where art films turned up rather late and often censored, but in a cultural cornucopia of undiscovered American cinema. Indeed, Dublin was the very best place for us to be. Telefís Éireann hadn't yet started. Meanwhile, Ireland had the highest per capita cinema-going public of any country in western Europe. Dublin was awash with thirty or more small cinemas all over the city, each with a double bill which changed three

Mike Dibb, television documentary film-maker whose series include 'Ways of Seeing', remembers Dublin, cinema and the Westerns of Budd Boetticher

times a week, Monday to Wednesday, Thursday to Friday, with a complete change of programme on Sunday, when it was normally necessary to book in advance.

Our next challenge was to find a more efficient way of accessing the gems in this ever-changing public library of British and American films. Peter began subscribing to *Cahiers du cinéma*, still in its heyday of Truffautesque and Godardian US-oriented hyperbole; but it was another French publication that became our Bible. *Vingt ans de cinéma américain* had just been published in Paris. It was edited by Jean-Pierre Coursodon and among its contributors was the French director, Bertrand Tavernier. After a year by year summary of the evolution of Hollywood from 1940 to 1960, it contained very opinionated biographies of all the major and minor directors, stars and supporting actors. What it didn't contain, however, was a list of the films referred to. This became our next task. In the spirit of my orderly father, Peter and I painstakingly went through the whole book extracting all the film titles, often translating them from French, and recompiling them into an alphabetical dictionary, of which we each still have a copy. We invented our own star system of directorial evaluation and, needless to say, bought the whole auteur theory lock, stock and barrel! We were on our way.

Every day the Dublin evening papers devoted several columns to complete listings and times for all films showing throughout the city and its suburbs. After a quick glance at our dictionary, we were off to catch *The Stranger* (Orson Welles, 1946), given only supporting picture status at the Rialto, Dundrum. Next day it was off to the Gala, Ballyfermot, to catch Burt Lancaster swinging his way through Robert Siodmak's 1952 *The Crimson Pirate* ("bondissant et savoureux"), followed by an Anthony Mann Western or Don Siegel's 1956 *Invasion of the Body Snatchers* ("le meilleur film de science

fiction que nous ayons jamais vu") or another particular favourite, Budd Boetticher's gangster movie, *The Rise and Fall of Legs Diamond*, a new release in 1960.

Indeed, if I had to think of a single group of films that encapsulated the naive but real excitement of that period of my life, it would have to be those of Budd Boetticher. André Bazin, editor of *Cahiers du cinéma*, called his film *Seven Men from Now* (1956) "le plus simple et le plus beau western d'après guerre". It was just one of a string of small-scale B-feature Westerns, each of them featuring the almost expressionless yet vivid presence of Randolph Scott, and almost all of them written by Burt Kennedy. They belonged to a period in Hollywood, alas long gone, when a small group of people could find a creative space inside the system. Working at the low-budget end of a popular genre, Boetticher and his team were able to take familiar features of this genre and give them genuinely fresh and inventive inflections: this modest sequence of films had the simplicity, spare dialogue, visual elegance and humour of the best moral fables, and, in their own way, they were exemplary. I think what I also liked was that they were B features and therefore ignored by the mainstream critics of the national newspapers, whose opinions I didn't much rate. They were films, I felt, whose qualities I was discovering for myself with, of course, a little initial help from the French... and Charles Barr.

Charles continued to be a more frenetic filmgoer than me. I never matched his (alleged) twenty-one films in one weekend in Belfast. All I could manage was two films a day, every day for three months, while studying for my final exams at Dublin University. If I could have been allowed to answer questions on Hollywood 1940-1960 rather than on English and Spanish literature, I think it likely I would have got a better degree.



Moral fable: Randolph Scott and Claude Akins in Boetticher's 'Comanche Station'

Making the news

Stephen Bottomore

Topical Budget: The Great British News Film

Luke McKernan, BFI Publishing,
£9.95 (VHS cassette £19.95), 180pp

Filming the Boer War

John Barnes, Bishopsgate Press,
£25, 340pp

Seventy years ago Captain Holt-White ran the Topical Budget newsreel, based in Gray's Inn Road, where ITN is presently to be found. Holt-White apparently shared Sir Alastair Burnet's fascination with the royal family, a subject which dominated many of Topical's films.

The quaintly named Topical Budget began in 1911, but it was soon languishing against its main competitors, Pathé and Gaumont. It was given a new lease of life when it became the official government newsreel for recording the First World War, but it was only when Holt-White arrived in 1917 that things really started to hum, and by the following year sales had doubled. With the help of talented cameramen like J. B. McDonald and Harold Jeapes, the Topical captured some of the best pictures of the war, culminating in a film of Allenby's entry into Jerusalem. Lord Beaverbrook noted that "The Topical Budget shown in every picture palace was the decisive factor in maintaining the morale of the



BARNES COLLECTION

people during the black days of the early summer of 1918".

This success catapulted the Topical into a solid position. Seen by 3.5 million people each week in the 20s, the Topical's programmes consisted of a mixture of items about the rich and famous, sport (nearly 10 per cent of the entire output was devoted to horseracing) and politics – minus any controversy. Holt-White's love of royalty ensured that there were plenty of items about the Prince of Wales and he sent no fewer than fifteen cameras to cover a royal wedding in 1922. As now, the royals some-

times became exasperated with their camp-followers, as did another object of Topical's attentions, Charlie Chaplin. Plagued by cameramen on his 1921 visit to Britain, he exclaimed: "What leeches... This gets sickening". The cameramen were even less merciful in their dealings with rival newsreel companies, sabotaging their colleagues' shots by shining mirrors in their lenses, and even throwing smoke bombs.

McKernan describes Topical's history with skill and clarity and his book is a valuable record of the company's twenty-year output, most of which survives (a videocassette featuring a range of items from the newsreels is available to accompany the book). McKernan's view that "There is a freer, more imaginative camerawork in the best of the newsreels than in most silent fiction films made in Britain" would be shared by John Barnes, whose *Filming the Boer War*, covering the year 1899, is the fourth in his series on the first five years of Britain's cinema. During this period, from the first public showings in 1895/6 until the end of Queen Victoria's reign in 1901, Britain was the world's leading innovator in film production, and Barnes performs an invaluable task in chronicling these early years in such detail.

The title of the present volume is something of a misnomer, in that more than the Boer war is covered, including descriptions of the frantic efforts made to get pictures of the Grand National on to London's screens the same day, Sir Herbert Beerbohm Tree performing in *King John*, films of the Passion Play, plus comedies and dramas. But for Barnes, it is the filming of the Boer (or more accurately, Anglo-Boer) war and of the Dreyfus Affair that are the crucial events in terms of cinema's future development. Unable to obtain convincing coverage of either event, film-makers were often forced to rely on artifice and outright fakery (see my articles in *Sight and Sound*, Autumn issues 1980, 83, and 84).

As well as production, Barnes looks at exhibition and at developments in cinema equipment. In terms of sources for his work, he skilfully trawls his by now familiar, but still impressive, arsenal of material, including surviving films and the contemporary photographic and theatrical press. He is generous in his acknowledgments to a network of historians around Britain, and pulls off several coups, among them tracing the granddaughter of one of the pioneers, Lewis Sealy, and finding a Méliès film,



NATIONAL FILM ARCHIVE

British newsreels lead the world: the Boer war photographed by W. K.-L. Dickson for British Mutoscope & Biograph, top; Harold Jeapes with batman filming in Egypt or Palestine in 1917-18 for Topical Budget, right

thought lost, of the Greco-Turkish war. It is a measure of Barnes' achievement that the standard works on the early British cinema look threadbare by comparison.

Early cinema studies has been a growth area in recent years, with a flood of books and articles devoted to reassessing the period. I find two tendencies in recent research and writing: first, a bias towards the origins of US cinema, and second, an emphasis on theory, particularly of a neo-Freudian variety (witness Miriam Hansen's recent *Babel and Babylon*, reviewed in *Sign and Sound* October 1991). Against these tendencies, Barnes' work stands out like a sore thumb. It is relentlessly empiricist and British. Furthermore, it concentrates on factual cinema when, in recent years, other historians have been seduced by the origins of the story film. But actuality (or documentary) film arrived first and achieved its highest expression in Britain five years before fiction took over our screens.

Barnes in this book continues to record the emergence through actuality films of techniques like tracking and editing, which then also started to filter through to story films. In 'The Kiss in the Tunnel', he describes the radical, but apparently simple editing innovation in which a scene of a couple kissing in a carriage is cut between two shots of a train. In his recent book *D. W. Griffith and the Origins of American Narrative Film*, Tom Gunning has demonstrated exactly why Griffith's editing innovations were so powerful. Yet Barnes indicates that equally important experiments had been carried out earlier than this by Britain's first film-makers.

Many would argue that the factual film is the most distinctive feature of British cinema. The 'creative treatment of actuality' has been a guiding theme from Grierson to modern television documentaries and news. But it all began long before that, as these two well-illustrated books testify.

Tricks of the trade

Roger Noake

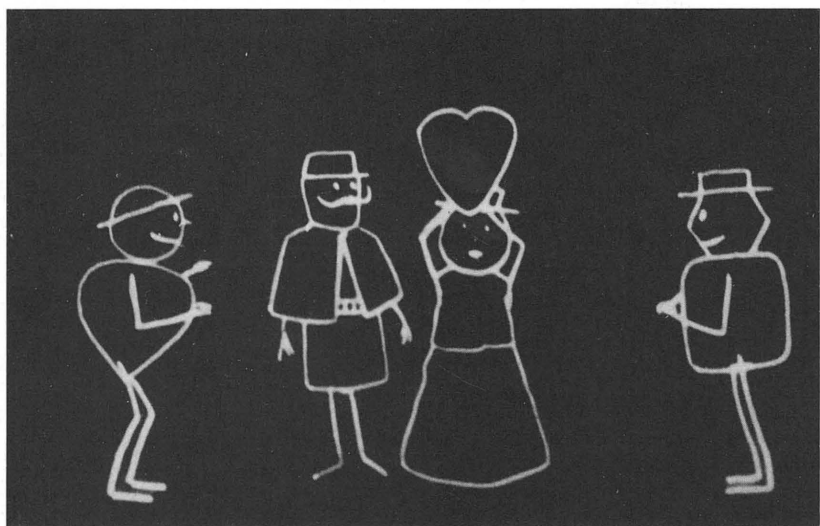
Emile Cohl, Caricature, and Film

Donald Crafton, Princeton University Press, \$24.95, 404pp

A square in the 12ème arrondissement of Paris, a few kilometres away from EuroDisney, is the only monument to Emile Cohl, the 'father of animation'. Donald Crafton's excellent book on the pioneer French animator, first published in 1990 and now reprinted in paperback, provides an explanation for the neglect of Cohl and an argument for the recognition of his importance within film history.

By 1908, when at the age of fifty-one the illustrator and cartoonist Emile Courtet (Emile Cohl) began his short but prolific career as animator, writer and director in the burgeoning French film industry, Gaumont was a successful company, though running short of new original product. Over the next few years, Gaumont and Pathé were to establish themselves as leading international forces in film production and exhibition. Cohl's innovations contributed significantly to this success, as well as establishing the foundations of the modern animated cartoon. By 1918, however, the embryonic European industry was in crisis

Father of animation: the elaborated stick figures of Emile Cohl's 'Drame chez les fantoches', made for Gaumont in 1908



following a spate of exciting team-produced films from the US. By 1930 Cohl was destitute and in poor health.

Crafton sets about unravelling the process of unrealised potential and personal tragedy with a fine sense of objectivity and attention to veracity. He is aware that, when it comes to claims about the origins of animation, what might politely be called 'technology transfer' (the process whereby companies appropriated one another's innovations) and the destruction of much source material have contributed to the growth of myths about this vital historical moment. He takes nothing for granted, examining the turn-ups of early cinema with practised scepticism. He marshals evidence to question easy assumptions, elaborating in two important chapters his argument for the clear periodisation of early animation and for attention to the development of the structure of animation images. The simplistic correlation between comic strip animation and live action film is closely scrutinised.

Cohl's Gaumont films are his best known. *Fantasmagorie* and *Drame chez les fantoches* both employed the familiar elaborated stick figure white-on-black style, using an improvised technique which has become synonymous with primitive animation. But Crafton establishes that Cohl's style and techniques extended much further. The range and variety of his work was startling and included live action, trick film and object animation as well as mixed techniques. Cohl had also developed an identifiable aesthetic – the simple, childlike drawings were rooted in the Incoherent movement of the 1880s, in which he played a central role. It was this group which, in a desire to resist the sobriety of the Academy, announced an exhibition of work by people who did not know how to draw. The movement was interested in the grotesque and eschewed anything they considered boring.

The frenzied inventiveness of Cohl's animated films at times borders on incoherence. The anti-draughtsmanship, the taste for crude puns and obscure asides – these, Crafton argues, are not signs of a filmmaker struggling with the task of establishing codes and translating a caricaturist's methods to film, but a considered aesthetic created by a mature artist who knew and understood his audience. The techniques of animation were hardly developed at this time. Cohl, who grew increasingly resentful of his imitators, had developed an artisanal

method of production which matched his use of line with freshness and improvisation. It was a method which could never be adopted by the studios or attuned to Taylorism and industrial production techniques.

In 1911, Cohl went to the US for eighteen months to work for Eclair in their Fort Lee enterprise. There he produced the first animated series based on a popular comic strip – *The Newlyweds* – as well as a series of short animated newsreels akin to political cartoons. In 1914, the studio burned down and the work was destroyed. Recently, one episode of *The Newlyweds* has been discovered and Crafton argues on the basis of this that Cohl can now be seen as the originator of the cartoon series, if not the animated film. Even during this period, when his output of material was intense, Cohl worked alone, finding the regular production of his 20-metre newsreels relaxing. After the First World War, Cohl, and the French industry, struggled to regain their position in the world. It was a tragically doomed struggle exemplified by Cohl himself: the Romantic individualist working against the grain of a new, confident, populist social vision.

This is a timely work. Crafton's meticulous charting of the complex passage from artisanal to mechanical and industrial production illuminates a significant period of transition. When mechanical reproduction is now giving way to electronic simulation, this book provides a model for understanding the complex forces which come into play at such historical moments, and which extend beyond Cohl's tragic life story.

Home and away

Gunther Kress

Australian Television: Programs, Pleasures and Politics

John Tulloch and Graeme Turner (eds), Allen and Unwin, £10.95, 204pp

Those who enjoy a hint of eucalypt in their family viewing, or in their theory, will already have snapped up their copy of *Australian Television* when it first appeared in 1989. And so they should. The nation that has given the world Kylie Minogue and Jason Donovan, *The Young Doctors*, *Prisoner*, *Cell Block H*, *Country Practice*, *The Henderson Kids* (more Kylie), not to mention World Series Cricket, deserves no less. Reading the paperback edition of the book now, in Lon-

don, raises the question of what makes Australian television so different, so *pleasurable*? Is it simply all that sun?

The key is to be found in Stuart Cunningham's chapter 'Textual Innovation in the Australian Historical Mini-Series', where he uses the concept of 'multi-perspectivism', that is, the "multiplication of authorising perspectives within a 'sprawling' narrative field". This idea is similar to the post-structuralist notion of 'dispersion' – whether of the subject, the narrative, the viewing or reading position. But the term can be interpreted in different ways. In British soaps like *EastEnders* or *The Bill*, it denotes 'fragmentation': in *The Bill*, life itself is presented as fragmentary, while in *EastEnders*, it is always on the verge of fragmenting under intolerable pressures. In *Neighbours*, on the other hand, where society is represented as pluralistic, multi-perspectivism means 'multiplicity'. *Neighbours* is bright, breezy and upbeat; there are no social problems, for society has been replaced by sociality.

The picture is, however, more complex than this. Multi-perspectivism is only one way of dealing with multi-culturalism. On the negative side, politically progressive Australian series such as *Country Practice* or *GP* (a series about a medical practice in inner Sydney) tend to maintain a white, Anglo-Australian perspective in which the ethnic 'other' appears as the bearer of social problems. In *EastEnders*, such questions are worked through in the context of a plural but integrated society.

While the multi-perspectival model is the dominant framework in the anthology, those chapters which belong under the heading display no theoretical uniformity. In 'Television Documentary', Dugald Williamson's precise and subtly written analysis of representational processes in the mini-series *The Rough and the Smooth* demonstrates how these techniques produce particular types of social meanings. Towards the other end of the spectrum are Graeme Turner's 'Transgressive TV: From *In Melbourne Tonight to Perfect Match*' and John Hartley's 'Continuous Pleasures in Marginal Places: TV, Continuity and the Construction of Communities'. These celebrate the reading process: the audience's ability to use for its own ends ambiguity, or, as Turner, quoting Adrian Martin, puts it, the "flagrant flaunting of the rules, smashed conventions, fragmented surfaces".

These contributions reproduce positions similar to those offered by *Neighbours* – an egalitarian, democratic space for readers and viewers as well as programme-makers. Notions of the social here give way to sociality in the same way as in multi-perspectival television. If *Neighbours* can be seen as the embodiment of a Majorite vision of society, then there is a danger that these forms of writing could be construed as its theoretical underpinning. But the volume also suggests solutions to these problems. Bob Hodge's 'Children and Television' proposes, via his concept of "the ideological complex", a way of using the multi-perspectival model in social accounts of television, while Theo van Leeuwen's 'Changed Times, Changed Tunes: Music and the Ideology of the News' provides a brilliant theoretical and methodological schema for understanding the relationship between complex historical shifts and the production of multi-perspectival musical texts.

Man of many parts

Mark Lawson

Michael Grade: Screening the Image
Mihir Bose, Virgin, £15.99, 296pp

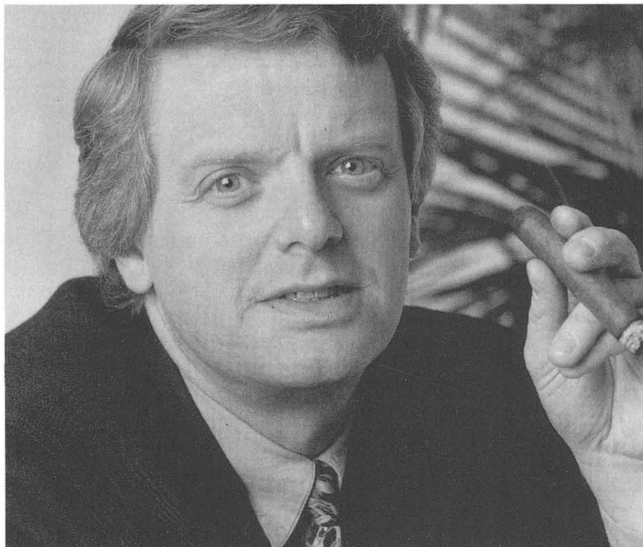
Mihir Bose, the busy and always interesting journalist who has written this unauthorised life of Michael Grade, comes fresh to the subject of television. Previously, his main subjects have been sport and money. Admittedly, it can be argued that Grade's career began in sport (as a teenage star columnist on the *Daily Mirror*) and has more recently been acutely concerned with money (the £500,000 'golden handcuffs' deal which persuaded him to stay at Channel 4). But even so, Grade is not an obvious figure for Bose to profile, and the fact that he was attracted to the subject indicates the high public profile Grade now enjoys, or suffers.

The chief executive of Channel 4 is, frankly, the only managerial figure in television of whom a lively, and even occasionally racy, biography (which Bose has achieved) could be envisaged. A life of John Birt would sell heavily to those in television but anaesthetise those outside. It is depressing to contemplate the publisher's advance that might be offered for a chronicle of the life and times of Michael Checkland. Michael Grade alone is the executive equivalent of a crossover artist.

His character and career offer his biographer factors which might be summarised, with a bow to the art form in which he operates, as *Dynasty* (the heir to Lew and Leslie and Bernie), *Dallas* (the cigars, braces and swift one-liners of his public profile), *Bouquet of Barbed Wire* (the failed marriages and Dempster-fodder romantic complications), *The Power Game* (versus Birt at the BBC, versus Isaacs and the holders of the sacred flame of Charlotte Street at Channel 4, versus Thatcher, Mellor and supporting Tories for the future of Channel 4) and, every day of every year, *University Challenge* (Jewish early school-leaver competes with intellectually arrogant Oxbridge types who run television). Bose efficiently programmes each of these themes into his scheme.

This reviewer should perhaps confess to a minor involvement. As a declared admirer of Grade, I was interviewed by the author and my testimony is used (correctly and fairly) to defend the subject throughout the

Michael Grade: the executive equivalent of a crossover artist. Grade's scheduling skills made an improbable ratings success of the cheap Australian export 'Neighbours' and found bigger audiences for the BBC current affairs programme 'Panorama'



book. Something I did not say to Bose – but which a reading of this biography has consolidated – is that I now believe (as I say in the book) that Michael Grade is, since the grievous loss of Jeremy Isaacs to opera and Denis Forman to the pension scheme, the most interesting and talented executive in British television; however (as I don't say in the book), he is locked into the wrong job.

The point is that there is no executive in television with the range of programming enthusiasms possessed by Grade. There is a part of his brain which can take the cheap Aussie export *Neighbours* and, with a tweak of the schedules, produce an improbable ratings success. Yet there is also that side of his mind which is passionate about the work of Dennis Potter and Alan Bleasdale. His backing for the latter's *GBH* gave its creators cash and confidence and acres of the schedules. Also, while at the BBC, he found a better slot and bigger audiences for a current affairs series like *Panorama*. The inability to fit him into any lowbrow-highbrow slot was an enormous strength in his negotiations with the revenge-on-television Thatcher Tories for the future of Channel 4.

This spread of interests is urgently required in two specific places in British television. At the BBC, where the surprise Tory fourth term leaves the corporation dangerously vulnerable in the 1996 Charter renegotiations, and at ITV, where a central scheduler, balancing soap against current affairs, money against programmes, baron against baron, is called for. Grade would have been a natural for the second job, and a sparky gamble as Director General of the BBC. It is Channel 4 which, though properly grateful to him for his lobbying against politicians, now needs him least. Mihir Bose's entertaining book ends, correctly, on that depressing reflection.

Lest we forget

Patrice Petro

Femmes Fatales: Feminism, Film Theory, Psychoanalysis
Mary Ann Doane, Routledge, £10.99, 312pp

Mary Ann Doane's new book ostensibly belongs to a currently fashionable academic sub-genre – a collection of articles by a single author, originally presented as conference papers or published in small-circulation journals, and reassembled in the guise of a considered and elaborated book. Of course, a series of essays does not always a book make, despite loud and often paradoxical claims to the contrary by promotional blurbs. These celebrate this or that anthology for bringing together 'pivotal' work, even though the pieces in question have been difficult to find, thus raising the question of how significant they really are. As one critic has quipped, the pervasiveness of this publishing strategy can be gauged by a comparison between the old academic slogan 'publish or perish' and its newer version 'commodify or die'.

The prospective buyer of *Femmes Fatales*, however, need not beware, for this volume brings together influential articles which have set the terms for debates in feminist film theory over the past decade. Included here are some of Doane's most important, most debated, and still controversial writ-

ings: 'Film and Masquerade: Theorizing the Female Spectator' (1982), 'Woman's Stake: Filming the Female Body' (1981), and 'The Moving Image' (1985). In addition to material written specifically for this book, *Femmes Fatales* includes analyses of individual films which, although previously published in small-circulation journals and specialised collections, merit a wider readership. Most notable in this respect is the essay 'The Erotic Barter', which offers the most compelling analysis to date of G. W. Pabst's 1929 film *Pandora's Box* and its place in Weimar cinema and culture.

Doane's larger project in *Femmes Fatales* is to interrogate the status of psychoanalysis in feminist theory, and to respond to those who have criticised psychoanalysis for effacing differences of race, class, sexual preference and historical context, and thus for marginalising women of colour, lesbians, Third World and working-class women in relation to white middle-class feminism. Doane addresses issues of racial and sexual difference in the penultimate essay, where she focuses both on psychoanalytic texts (Freud, Fanon) and on individual films (Griffith's *Birth of a Nation* and Sirk's *Imitation of Life*). Here, as in the rest of the book, Doane is careful to "investigate the difficulties in setting limits to the psychoanalytic enterprise", while at the same time mindful of the need to "explore areas which psychoanalysis is accused of being incapable of dealing with" – notably racial difference.

Psychoanalysis nevertheless emerges as the privileged discourse, by which Doane admits to feeling "intellectually trapped", while at the same time confessing to "admiring the form and structure, the specific architecture, of my cage". This logic becomes particularly problematic in 'Remembering Women', in which Doane criticises feminists (such as Teresa de Lauretis, E. Ann Kaplan and Annette Kuhn) for turning to historiography as a (supposed) way out of the impasses of psychoanalytic film theory. The task of feminist theory, she contends, "must be not that of remembering women, remembering real women, immediately accessible, but of producing remembering women. Women with memories and hence histories".

This assumed opposition between history and theory creates an artificial and illusory divide: are the aims of feminist historiography and feminist theory really so antagonistic? Can the historical project of remembering women be separated from the goal of "producing women with memories and hence histories"? Despite the fact that Doane challenges feminist historiography (which she understands narrowly as a form of positivism), *Femmes Fatales* is a testimony to the vitality of the feminist enterprise, and to the importance of continuing to reassess its role.

A sense of reality

John Orr

**The Address of the Eye:
A Phenomenology of Film Experience**
Vivian Sobchack,
Princeton University Press, £12, 330pp

Vivian Sobchack's new book is a landmark in film theory, a formidable rewriting which casts a long shadow over the sterile

domination of the field by semiology over the last two decades. Without resorting to overt polemic, her arguments expose the dead end of 'the imaginary signifier' and integrate film language within a general theory of cinematic perception. It is not the first or the best study to leave semiology trailing in its wake. This accolade must go to Gilles Deleuze's volumes, *Cinema 1: The Movement-Image* and *Cinema 2: The Time-Image*, published in the mid-80s. From a Bergsonian perspective, this work stressed the motor-sensory nature of the image and the human experience of time-as-duration honed to a fine art, according to its author, by the modern narratives of Orson Welles and Alain Resnais.

By contrast, Sobchack works from a radical phenomenology based on the writings of Maurice Merleau-Ponty. The moving image is seen as a shared experience between film-maker and spectator in which the cinematic expression (projected screen image) of perception (what the camera has recorded) is perceived by spectators through a matrix of expressive responses which can go with or against the grain, and which neither demand nor prove the existence of shared meanings.

Here there is no deterministic apparatus, no essentialist grammar of signs, and no passive spectators. Deleuze and Sobchack both stress the active role of film-makers and spectators, but while Deleuze argues that time in the cinema takes priority over considerations of space, Sobchack argues, more convincingly, that space takes priority over time. She also makes the stronger claim for film as an authentic technology, an honour she withholds from electronic media. In a complex and difficult passage, she argues that film is a technical extension of bodily experience and its innovations advance the powers of what she calls 'film's body'. What is meant by this, however, remains enigmatic.

In a long, illuminating digression on philosophy, Sobchack also reminds us of the close ties between Merleau-Ponty and Jacques Lacan, which demonstrate the compatibility of psychoanalysis and phenomenology. However, she declares firmly in favour of the latter when she states that the body makes sense of the world only through its palpable presence there. In cinema, the visible world is no deception, no false imaginary, and conveys no fundamental deformation of the self. On the contrary, cinema always enhances our perceptions, for the camera is a genuine instrument of discovery. The feature film is thus the expression of a lived experience to which audiences can respond expressively and affirmatively.

Regretfully, Sobchack makes little attempt to historicise her arguments. There is no movement from classical to modern cinema, as there is in Deleuze. Moreover, the clarity and rigour of her argument, an intellectual *tour de force*, are not matched by analyses of movies. Apart from a succinct dissection of the false subjectivities in *Lady in the Lake*, she mentions in passing key sequences in movies like *Persona* and *The Passenger* which firm up her arguments. Sobchack makes a compelling case for the abstractness of theory, but one is left feeling that the specifics are still to be addressed. That expectation, though, is part of the excitement generated by her book.

shorts

What a Producer Does:

The Art of Moviemaking (Not the Business)

Buck Houghton, Silman-James Press,
\$14.95, 200pp

● The producer of over a hundred *Twilight Zone* episodes describes his job as the creative centre of the film-making process. Taking the budget as a guide, he demonstrates the producer's involvement in every stage from story to post-production. Exhibition and distribution he considers best left in specialist hands.

Women Viewing Violence

Philip Schlesinger et al, BFI Publishing,
£9.99, 210pp

● Based on research commissioned by the Broadcasting Standards Council, this study draws on group interviews with women who have experienced violence and those who have not, to examine their response to depictions of male violence towards women on television. The authors claim that their methods are innovative in reception studies, breaking with narrowly deterministic approaches to focus on multiple, active reactions to specific programmes.

Interpreting Films: Studies in the Historical Reception of American Cinema

Janet Staiger, Princeton University Press,
\$16.95, 274pp



● Staiger discusses the current state of play in reception studies, arguing that looking historically at spectators' responses to films is an important part of film criticism. She maintains that movies contain no immanent meanings, and that interpretations are influenced by class, gender, race and ethnicity as well as history. The book contains case studies of *Foolish Wives*, *The Birth of a Nation* (above) and *Zelig*.

Sentimental Education: Schooling,

Popular Culture and the Regulation of Liberty

James Donald, Verso, £10.95, 203pp

● A collection of essays tracing the role of education in shaping the lives of citizens. Donald draws an analogy between education and broadcasting, setting the normative practices of these institutions against the subversive impulses of popular culture, from vampire movies and thrillers to pornography.

Motherhood and Representation:

the Mother in Popular Culture and Melodrama

E. Ann Kaplan, Routledge, £10.99, 250pp

● Kaplan considers depictions of motherhood in novels and films from 1830 to the present. She draws on psychoanalytical theory and historical study to chart contesting and contradictory definitions, looking in detail at Ellen Wood's popular novel *East Lynne* and at a wide range of films from Lois Weber's *The Blot to Now*, *Voyager*, *Stella Dallas* and *Marnie*.

REVIEWS

Reviews, synopses and full credits for all the month's new films and new British TV films

L'Amant (The Lover)

France/United Kingdom 1992

Director: Jean-Jacques Annaud

Certificate

18

Distributor

Guild

Production Companies

Renn Productions/
Films A2(Paris)/Burrill
Productions(London)
In collaboration with
Gaii Phong Film

Producers

Claude Berri

Timothy Burrill

Associate Producers

Jacques Tronel

Josée Benabent-Loiseau

Production Co-ordinators

Danielle Dumanoir

Marie-Laure Compain

Unit Production Directors

Jean-Claude Bourlat

Christine Raspillière

Head Location Managers

Vietnam:

Olivier Hélie

Nguyen Thanh Son

France:

Jean-Yves Asselin

Location Managers

Vietnam:

Maxime Bochner

Alfred Lot

Rachid Bouafia

Nguyen Van Dai

France:

Philippe Roux

Stéphanie Seilhean

Post-production

Co-ordinator/Manager

Véronique Boucheny

Casting

France:

Françoise Combadière

Françine Cathelain

Olivier Mergault

Hong Kong:

Patricia Pao

USA:

Johanna Merlin

UK:

Celestia Fox

Patsy Pollock

Mary Selway

Extras Vietnam:

Dang Thu Hong

Sergei B. Balakin

Assistant Directors

Isabelle Henry

Frédéric Auburtin

Vietnam:

Nguyen Phu Huu

Pierre Minot

Nguyen Vinh Son

Jean-Luc Tran

Quach Manh Kha Le

Trac

Pham Ngoc Chau

France:

Ewa Santamaria

Screenplay

Gérard Brach

Jean-Jacques Annaud

Based on the novel by

Marguerite Duras

Adaptation

Thomas Murat

Translation:

Eric Sterling Collins

Director of Photography

Robert Fraisse

In colour

Camera Operator

Michele Picciaredda

Optical Effects Supervisor

Frédéric Moreau

Optical Effects/Mattes

Magic Camera

Company

Head Editor

Noëlle Boisson

Editor

Diane Logan

Production Designer

Thanh At Hoang

Set Decorator

Olivier Radot

Set Dresser

Sophie Martel

Storyboard

Maxime Rebières

Special Effects Supervisor

Frédéric Moreau

Special Effects

Georges Demetreau

Additional:

Patrice Beau

Music

Gabriel Yared

Choreography

Éléonor Fazan

Costume Design

Yvonne Sassinot

de Nesle

Key Wardrobe

Jean-Daniel Vuillermoz

Agnès Lamourre

Wardrobe

Mimi Gayo

Brigitte Perez

Pascaline Suty

Mistresses:

Nguyen Q.G. Dung

Nguyen T. Kim

Anh Aline

Make-up

Key:

Anne-Marie Branca

Vietnam:

Nguyen Kieu Thu

Sound Design

Laurent Quaglio

ADR Editor

Alan J. Paley

Sound Recordists

Claude Villand

Bernard Leroux

Dolby stereo

Sound Re-recordists

France:

Jean-Pierre Dorat

Additional English

Dialogue:

Eric Sterling Collins

Sound Effects

Jean-Pierre Lelong

Jack Jullian-Gaufres

Mario Melchiorri

Consultants

Maritime:

Guy Wagner

History:

Son Nam

Behaviour:

Desmond Jones

Chinese Traditions:

Lam Thanh

Period Vehicles:

Martin Grange

Doubles

Jane March:

Do Thi Hong Thuy

Tania Boudichenko

Tony Leung:

Tran Huu Hien

Vincent Pham

Cast

Jane March

Young Girl

Tony Leung

Chinaman

Frédérique Meininger

Mother

Anna Giovanetti

Pierre

Melvil Poupard

Paul

Lisa Faulkner

Hélène Lagonelle

Xiem Mang

Chinaman's Father

Raymonde Heudeline

Writer (end)

Philippe Le Dem

French Teacher

Jeanne Moreau

Voice-over

Ann Schaufuss

Anne-Marie Stretter

Quach Van An

Limousine Driver

Tania Torrens

Boarding-house

Headmistress

Yvonne Wingerter

Writer (beginning)

Hélène Patarot

Assistant Mistress

Do Minh Vien

Nguyen Thi Hoa

Young Servants

Frédéric Auburtin

Liner Pianist

Nguyen Van Lam

Kitchen Helper

Minh Trang

Dormitory Supervisor

Truong Thu

Bus Driver

Ly Nguyen Phat

Lam Thanh

Servants

Vu Kim Trong

Young Girl's Coolie

Vu Dinh Thi

Ferry Captain

Lu Van Trang

Bus Controller

Nguyen Thi Cam Thuy

Bride

Tieu Nu

Thai Giang

Chau Sieu

Bride's Go-betweens

Alido H. Gaudencio

Anne-Marie Stretter's

Driver

10,348 feet

115 minutes

English version

A woman writes her reminiscences of a love affair she had as a young girl in Vietnam. At the age of fifteen, she lives in a school run by her mother, together with her two brothers – Pierre, an aggressive opium addict, and the fragile Paul. Returning to school in Saigon, she meets a wealthy young Chinese man on a ferry crossing. He gives her a lift to Saigon in his car, and begins to touch her. In the Chinese pension where she is lodged, the girl discusses sex with her friend Hélène.

She finds the young man waiting for her in his car, and makes a kiss at him through the window; on their next meeting, he takes her to an apartment where he meets his mistresses, and they make love. They continue their affair; he tells her that he has an arranged marriage in store for him. Returning home, the girl is confronted by her mother – who has received a letter from the school telling her about the affair – and by a violent Pierre.

The family goes to dinner with the lover, who is unsettled by their lack of etiquette; Pierre threatens him while the girl dances with Paul. Returning to the apartment, the girl makes love with her enraged lover, and asks him for money. She then gives it to her mother, who is pleased to think that money is the real motive for the affair. Her mother asks the girl's headmistress to grant her exceptional freedom at the school, where she is already the object of scandal.

The lover pleads unsuccessfully with his father to absolve him from the planned marriage; the girl is present in the crowd at his wedding procession. Her mother tells her that the

lover has paid Pierre's debts and his passage back to France, where the family is soon to follow. Expecting a final tryst, the girl returns to the apartment only to find it empty. As their ship leaves port to take the family back to France, she sees his car on the quayside. Many years later, after she has become a writer, she and her lover speak on the telephone and she learns he still loves her.

In the well-documented dispute surrounding this film, Marguerite Duras dropped out of collaboration with director Jean-Jacques Annaud and began to write her own revision of her novel *L'Amant*: a semi-novel, semi-script text entitled *L'Amant de la Chine du Nord*. What is surprising is not that she should have wanted to provide an 'authorised' version of the story, since much of her written *oeuvre* has hovered on the cusp of fiction and scenario, and since obsessive reworking of the same slender themes has been a constant for her. What is surprising is that anyone could ever have conceived of a common ground between this mercurially subtle author and such a pathologically glossy director. The mismatch surpasses all expectations.

The film's most glaring fault is linguistic. That it was shot in English may seem immediately to jeopardise the elusive nature of Duras' language; but more fundamentally, much of the dialogue seems to have been translated literally from the French, using a bad trans-Atlantic phrasebook (characters begin sentences with "Me, I..."; Pierre warns the lover, "Take care, little buddy"). The film's language is the *lingua franca* of a cinematic no-man's-land – in fact, of the ad-land in which Annaud first won his spurs.

A more elusive flaw perhaps – but the one on which the whole film is predicated – is its misunderstanding of the role of writing in the novel. The first-person narrative, supposedly Duras' autobiography, is conflated indeterminately with the fictional autobiography of an imaginary 'I' and with the biography of a fictional 'her'; the story tells itself in a blurring of tenses, of memory and event. Here, however, the presence of a Duras-like author-figure seated at her desk frames the film, like a stamp of quality appended to it as an after-thought. And



Me, I: Jane March

in voice-over, Jeanne Moreau's cracked English stands for Duras, as if the two women were interchangeable cyphers for the voice of female experience.

In this light, the girl's stated intentions to write become meaningless; in the film, it is practically impossible to equate her with the author-figure, so sharply are they differentiated. The process of narration simply forms a 'quality' frame for a glossily kitsch picture, like a gold-leaf border stuck round an Athena poster by David Hamilton. Hamilton's soft-focus Sapphism sets the tone for a good deal of the film – the exchange of confidences between the girl and her co-nymphet Hélène is straight out of his *Bilitis* – while much of the rest belongs to the *Emmanuelle* school of fey erotic tourism.

Dramatically, the film is an uneasy match of public spectacle and torrid private drama. The couple's cloistered love is set against the bustle of Saigon, and the film's best scene has them leaving the room and floating in utter detachment through the throng outside, the noise of which has already infiltrated their love nest. The other panel of the narrative is the oppressive family, played here as Dickensian melodrama, with an abject, lachrymose mother, two luridly demented brothers, and a tawdry *souçon* of sibling incest tossed in to spice up the restaurant scene.

As with the *Emmanuelle* cycle, it is hard to know whether the scenery is the frame for the sex or vice versa. *The Lover* is ostensibly anti-exotic, studiously realistic in its evocation of 20s Vietnam; yet what Annaud is concerned to show us is precisely the fine observation of travel writing; the sort that aspires to go beyond tourism and ends up as a sort of hyper-tourism. And it is misplaced realism, because in Duras' imagination there is no concrete real, only an undifferentiated realm of memory and language out of which discrete objects sporadically emerge. Annaud dwells fetishistically on these objects – the girl's shoes and hat, the lover's car – and each looks undeniably *right*, but right in a world of right-looking objects. Thus each loses any fetishistic power other than that of affirming the efficacy of the props department.

This sort of lurid realism seeks to pass itself off as a rich, nostalgic fantasy of France's colonial past and as an indisputably concrete slice of lived experience. Both agendas are sabotaged by Annaud's penchant for glaringly showy shots – close-up inserts of the girl's decrepit canvas shoes, the lover's gleaming car framed between her legs and, absurdly, a shot of the speeding car from a hedgehog's-eye view. In one sex scene, fast-cut close-ups of flesh aim at breaking down the fiction in what should be a moment of transgressive ecstasy. The effect is spoiled when you realise that Annaud's last film had an equivalent apotheosis – the sequence of the cub's mushroom-induced hallucinations in *The Bear*.

Jonathan Romney

Aux yeux du monde (Autobus)

France 1991

Director: Eric Rochant

Certificate
15
Distributor
Artificial Eye
Production Companies
Les Productions
Lazennec/FR3 Films/
SGGC/La Générale
d'Images
With the participation
of Studio Canal +/
Soficas Investimage
2 & 3 - Cofimage
Producer
Alain Rocca
Production Associate
Adeline Lecallier
Production Co-ordinator
Yves Hersen
Production Manager
Xavier Amblard
Casting
Pierre Amzallag
Children:
Marc Bellini
Extras:
Catherine Maloubier
Assistant Directors
Jacques Royer
Philippe Tourret
Screenplay
Eric Rochant
Director of Photography
Pierre Novion
In colour
Camera Operators
Roland Gautherin
Jean-Loup Afchain
Editor
Catherine Quesemond
Production Designer
Pascale Fenouillet
Art Director
Thierry François
Scenic Artist
Jean-Maurice Eschrich
Music
Gérard Torikian
Costume Designer
Martine Rapin
Wardrobe
Céline Venant
Children:
Lydie Bonnaire
Make-up
Supervisor:
Geneviève Peyralade
Michèle
Constantinides
Sound Editors
François Gedigie
Sound Recordists
Jean-Jacques Ferran
Music:
Pascal Jullien
Sound Re-recorder
Jacques Lévy
Sound Effects
Pascal Chauvin
Production Assistant
Stéphane Toutiou
Stunts
François Bourdillon

Cast
Yvan Attal
Bruno
Kristin Scott-Thomas
Primary School
Teacher
Marc Berman
Chauffeur
Charlotte Gainsbourg
Juliette
Renan Mazéas
Bruno's Brother
David Burstein
Dan Herzberg
Luc Lavandier
Baby
Francine Olivier
Bruno's Mother
Michèle Foucher
Juliette's Mother
Aline Still
Headmistress
Daniel Milgram
Brigadier
Guy Perrot
Inspector
François Lalande
Grocer
Henry-Eugène Lambert
Garage Owner
Dimitri Furdul
Juliette's Father
Stéphane Dausse
Cousin
Corinne Mavros
Georges Mavros
Blind Couple
Pascal Benezec
Barman
Laurent Schilling
Alain Terreneuve
Vincent Winterhalter
Customers
Elisabeth Macocco
Manager
Pierre Zimmer
Prosecutor
Michel Favory
Prefect
Jean-Paul Audrain
Captain Brassard
Amelle Lazouguen
Amelle
Benjamin Piton
Benjamin
Elinor Jagodnyk
Elinor
Elisa Marie
Elisa
Jonathan Ramos
Jonathan
Julie Autran
Julie
Maxence Camelin
Maxence
Sébastien Coman
Sébastien
Yaelle Simkovitch
Yaelle
David Bissel
David
Dimitri Braga
Dimitri
Flora Sergeant
Flora
Guillaume Finzi
Guillaume
Julien Solillo
Julien
Linda Bouazza
Linda
Louis Garrigue
Louis
Mathieu Boucheron
Mathieu
Sophie Vergison
Sophie

8,781 feet
98 minutes

Subtitles

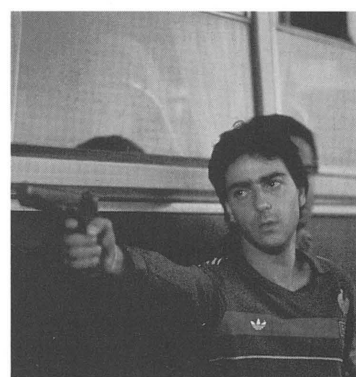
Bruno, in his early twenties and unemployed, has little to do but drop his younger brother off at the bus stop in the morning and collect him in the afternoon. Spending his time in between in the local bar, his frustration and growing sense of worthlessness are fuelled by his contemporaries' boldly discussed forays into crime. With his daily telephone calls to his girlfriend Juliette, who lives some distance away, as his only lifeline, Bruno conceives the idea of 'proving' himself to her by hijacking the school bus and forcing the driver to take him to her.

He takes the handgun he has concealed in his room and, having persuaded his brother to stay at home, tricks his way on to the bus. There he terrorises – albeit somewhat ineptly – the driver, the schoolchildren and their teacher. After he has let several of the children go, he has the driver follow a circuitous route. When the children fail to arrive at school, the police are alerted and news reports of their investigations are heard over the bus' radio. The haphazard journey is regularly interrupted, by Bruno's phone calls to an initially shocked and then increasingly anxious Juliette, by stops for petrol and supplies, and by innumerable false alarms – at one point they are flagged down to give a blind couple a lift.

Stopping for the night, Bruno wins over the hitherto fearful children by telling them a science-fiction story. The next day, Bruno's gun falls into the children's hands but, to the driver's chagrin, the teacher quickly returns it to Bruno. When Bruno is ignored at a roadside bar, he takes out his frustration on an expensive car outside. The owner catches up with them, but Bruno frightens him off with the gun (from which he has now removed all the bullets). Gradually, the tense relationship between Bruno and the teacher changes: he gains her sympathy as she learns of the reasons for his action, and she wins his respect.

At one roadside stop, the driver is approached by detectives, who reveal their plan to puncture one of the bus' tyres. When it is forced to stop, they will arrest Bruno. The driver appears to agree, but back on the road, as he becomes aware of the police convoy gathering behind them, he slows down and tells Bruno to jump. From the roadside, Bruno watches the convoy file past before he sets off for Juliette's. An armed posse of police later break into Juliette's house and Bruno is arrested. The bus begins its return journey under police escort.

Aux yeux du monde takes an action emblematic of a certain kind of thriller (the hijacking of a school bus by a gun-toting 'crazy' – see *Dirty Harry*) and plays it off against a motive of stereotypical Frenchness: the grand gesture made *pour l'amour*. The trouble is that the action stereotypes seem to exist more in the mind of director Eric Rochant than they do for his protagonist, Bruno. The latter lives in a world devoid of the musical or visual prod-



Harry hijacked: Yvan Attal

ucts of popular culture: no movie icons decorate his bedroom wall and there's no recourse to the jukebox. Bruno's grand gesture is forged instead from the spare activities that shape his day, and his life is observed in a style familiar from British social realism.

We cannot miss Juliette's mother standing behind her over the ironing board in one sequence, and we are nudged into accepting a diversity of reasons for Bruno's frustration by brief sequences which sketch in his social ambience: working mother, absent father, the void of unemployment. The tight framing of the bar sequences strips them of any incipient French provincial charm. The cramped, toy-town prissiness of the housing estate where Juliette lives – an off-the-peg utopia – is sullied by the invasion of armed police as if by beings from another planet. Indeed, the theme of alienation is underscored by Bruno's science-fiction story, a cue for Rochant's camerawork to turn the driver, with the aid of a puff of smoke from his cigarette, into an alien being.

But realism only goes so far, and in Yvan Attal's performance, Rochant seems to want to remind us again of a certain screen tradition. Bruno may be, in his own words, "no Charlot", but he certainly is a *naïf* somewhat in the Keaton mould, from his grand gesture itself – so out of sync with Juliette's own desires (she wishes he'd come by train) – to his dismay at the fear he has induced in two of his young hostages (he tosses away his bullets as a result), and most evident in the mime by which he persuades the teacher to initiate a sing-song with her pupils to allay any suspicions on the part of a blind couple.

Attal's performance generally prevents either pathos or sentimentality from quite taking over, despite the teacher's readiness to see Bruno in child-like terms. Rochant's uncloying way with his young performers also helps; despite the incongruity of their situation, they are shown maintaining their well-disciplined classroom manners. When Bruno asks for a hostage on one of his many trips to the call box, a hand shoots up: "Ca c'est vraiment cool", he exclaims in genuine admiration. Rochant's film is slight and well-meaning, and less incisive than it could be. But it is also much more appealing than its rather whimsical premise might suggest.

Verina Glaessner

Beethoven

USA 1992

Director: Brian Levant

Certificate
U
Distributor
UIP
Production Company
Universal
Executive Producer
Ivan Reitman
Producer
Joe Medjuck
Michael C. Gross
Co-producer
Gordon Wess
Associate Producer
Sheldon Kahn
Production Co-ordinator
Pamela Hoyt Hoffman
Unit Production Manager
Gordon Webb
Location Managers
Ira Stanley Rosenstein
2nd Unit:
Joseph Madalena
2nd Unit Directors
Glenn Randall Jnr
Michael C. Gross
Casting
Steven Jacobs
Associate:
Alan Berger
Extras:
Central Casting
Assisting Directors
Jerram A. Swartz
Todd Corman
David Spitzer
2nd Unit:
Tracy Rosenthal
Ira Stanley Rosenstein
Wendolyn Peterson
Screenplay
Edmond Dantes
Amy Holden Jones
Director of Photography
Victor J. Kemper
Colour
DeLuxe
2nd Unit Director of Photography
John M. Stephens
Underwater Photography
Pete Romano
Camera Operators
Bill Roe
2nd Unit:
Stephen G. Shank
Video Playback
Paul Murphy
Editors
Sheldon Kahn
William D. Gordan
Production Designer
Alex Tavoularis
Art Director
Charles Breen
Set Design
Stan Tropp
Gary Diamond
Set Decorator
Gary Fettis
Set Dressers
Eric Hulett
Kurt Hulett
Donald Kaeding
Carl Cassara
2nd Unit:
Mychael Bates
Production Illustrator
Mentor Huebner
Special Effects
Clifford P. Wenger
Derrick Crane
John Downey
Mechanical Effects
Creator:
Peter Knowlton
Designer:
David Nelson
Co-ordinator:
Scott Salik
Puppeteers
Andrew Workman
Norman Cabrera
Norman Tempia
Peter Abrahamson
Mike Regan
Porter Williams

Music
Randy Edelman
Orchestrations
Greig McRitchie
Music Editor
Tom Carlin
Songs
"Roll Over Beethoven"
by Chuck Berry,
performed by Paul
Schaffer and the
World's Most
Dangerous Band; "Lady
Marmalade" by Kenny
Nolan, Bob Crewe,
performed by Harry
Garfield
Costume
Design:
Gloria Gresham
Supervisor:
Margo Baxley
Costumers
Leslie Weir
Adrienne Manhan
2nd Unit:
Jimmy George
Make-up Artists
Ken Chase
Jim Scribner
Titles/Opticals
Pacific Title
Supervising Sound Editors
Tom McCarthy
Roxanne Jones
Supervising ADR Editor
David B. Cohn
Sound Recordists
Charles Wilborn
Scott Austin
Music:
Bob Fernandez
Foley:
David W. Alstadler
Dolby stereo
Sound Re-recordists
Gary C. Bourgeois
Scott Millan
Adam Jenkins
Sound Effects Editors
Don S. Walden
John O. Wilde
William Hartman
Mark Lapointe
Harry M. Cheney
David Williams
Victor B. Lackey
Production Assistants
Greg Rogers
Carla D. Bowen
Jennifer Kahn
George Tasch
David Gordon
Scott Groneman
Jordon Chinich
Jason Reitman
Tony Solomon
Stunt Co-ordinator
Buddy Joe Hooker
Stunts
Hank Hooker
Bobby Bass
Shawn Odum
John Meier
Danny Epper
Greg J. Barnett
Ralph Odum
Chad Robert Randall
Janet S. Brady
Thomas R. Harper
Dog Trainers
Glenn D. Garner
Nora Thompson
Robert R. Weatherwax
Debra Kellerman
Cast
Charles Grodin
George Newton
Bonnie Hunt
Alice Newton
Dean Jones
Dr Varnick
Nicholle Tom
Ryce
Christopher Castile
Ted

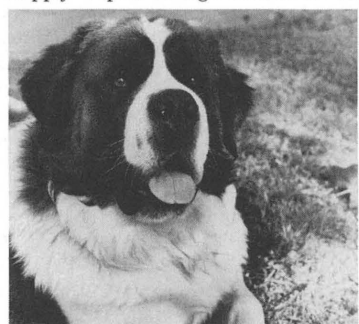
Sarah Rose Karr
Emily
Oliver Platt
Harvey
Stanley Tucci
Vernon
David Duchovny
Brad
Patricia Heaton
Brie
Laurel Cronin
Devonia Pest
O-Lan Jones
Biker Woman
Nancy Fish
Miss Grundel
Craig Pinkard
Homeless Man
Robi Davidson
Mark
Sherri Pysinger
Reporter
Patrick LaBrecque
Jacob Kenner
Matthew Brooks
Bullies
Chris Little
Newsreader

Lisa Gerber
Donna
Cory Danziger
Mark's Friend
Colleen O'Hara
Stephanie Massman
Young Women
Nicolas Mize
Young Man
Maxine Elliot
Old Woman
Cirroc Lofton
Chad Morton
Skateboarders
Melora Walters
Pet Shop Owner
Holly Wortell
Nurse
Lorraine Marga
Mother at Pet Store
Joseph Gordon-Levitt
Andres McKenzie
Students
Chris
Beethoven

7,863 feet
87 minutes

Dr. Varnick, head of the Pet Supply depot, sends his sidekicks Harvey and Vernon to raid the Valley Vista pet shop for puppies to use in animal experiments. Breaking in at night, the two steal a van-load of pups – including a young St Bernard which escapes from the speeding van. Finding its way next morning into the Newton household, the pup is rapturously received by the Newton children, Ryce, Ted and Emily. Overcome by their delight, and by the persuasion of his wife Alice, the uptight George Newton agrees to let the dog stay. They name it Beethoven. Over the next few months, Beethoven grows huge, disrupting the household and endearing himself to all the family except George, whose tidy life is reduced to chaos. George sets up a deal with two investors, Brad and Brie, to finance an expansion of his air-freshener business and, unaware that they plan to cheat him out of his company, invites them to dinner to clinch the deal. But Beethoven takes against the couple and sees them off the premises.

Dr Varnick, who is also the local vet, contracts to test a new type of ammunition on large dogs. Spotting Beethoven as an ideal candidate, he hints to George that St Bernards can turn vicious. He subsequently fakes an attack on himself by Beethoven and insists the dog be put down. George reluctantly leaves Beethoven at Varnick's clinic. But Emily insists she saw Varnick hitting the dog, and the whole family return to the clinic to investigate. There they find Beethoven gone, and Varnick miraculously uninjured. The Newtons trail Varnick to the Pet Supply depot. George breaks in as



Caninising

Beethoven is about to be shot and, with the help of the rest of the family and all the dogs imprisoned there, overcomes Varnick, Harvey and Vernon. Later the Newtons watch themselves, and the conviction of the villains, on television. George and Alice settle down for the night with Beethoven – and with all the other dogs rescued from Varnick's depot.

"We're goldfish people, ant-farm people – not dog people!" protests the horrified George Newton, foreseeing the wholesale disruption of his ordered life style. He's proved wrong, of course. His family are dog people at first sight – and so is he, though it takes him almost the whole film to admit it: handing over the cuddly monster to be put down, he tearfully mutters, "You were my dog, too". *Beethoven*, all appearances to the contrary, isn't about a dog – it's about the humanisation (or should that be caninisation?) of a man.

George, who makes air-fresheners – products for those who prefer to mask the messier aspects of life – relishes order for its own sake. "I had a schedule and now it's gone", he laments at one point, "I'll never have that schedule again!" In a long, vigorous montage sequence, set to (what else?) Chuck Berry's "Roll Over Beethoven" on the soundtrack, we see the spirit of benign chaos expand from a small furry bundle to a thirteen-stone occupation force. Muddled, chewed, drooled on, George (a performance of fastidious disbelief from Charles Grodin) becomes real – in the same way that, as his wife observes, "Beethoven made this house real. He put the dents in it".

Beethoven, in fact, simply reworks a well-worn Hollywood theme – repressed tight-ass reformed by intrusion of uncouth slob – but does it with an infectious energy that's hard to resist. The kids are likeable without being cute, the sentimental episodes are mercifully brief, and the film plays cheerfully stylised games with its locations, contrasting the sunlit lawns of the Newton home with the *noir* world of the canine prison camp, a dark satanic mill presided over by the sinister Dr Varnick – who in the climactic battle ends up impaled on his own syringes, like a parody of Toshiro Mifune's death in *Throne of Blood*.

The only questionable element is the film's underlying attitude, which is subtly regressive. What Beethoven (both dog and movie) stands for is family values in the traditional mould. A largely irrelevant episode involving an inept babysitter is dragged in to read us a smug parable against working mothers; and when at the climax the kids drive to the rescue, it's the son, not his older sister, who seizes the wheel of the car. But even so, there's no denying that *Beethoven* is a lot of fun. Lolloping amiably along at an exhilarating pace, pausing now and then to slurp us wetly around the face, it should delight all dog people – and maybe a few goldfish people too.

Philip Kemp

Book of Love

USA 1990

Director: Robert Shaye

Certificate
15
Distributor
Entertainment
Production Company
New Line Cinema
Executive Producer
Sara Risher
Producer
Rachel Talalay
Production Executive
Deborah Moore
Creative Executives
Michael DeLuca
Kevin Moreton
Mark Ordesky
Production Supervisor
Cindy Hornickel
Production Controller
Gail Cottrell
Production Co-ordinator
Paddy Cullen
Unit Production Manager
Patricia Whitcher
Location Manager
Gerrit Folsom
Post-production Supervisor
Joe Fineman
Casting
Penny Perry
Annette Benson
Associate:
Nan Diacovo
Extras:
Star Casting
Mary Santiago
Voice:
Barbara Harris
Assistant Directors
Josh King
Ty Arnold
Doug Raine
Mara J. Lee
Screenplay
William Kotzwinkle
Based on his novel *Jack in the Box*
Director of Photography
Peter Deming
Colour
CFI
Prints by:
Metrocolor
Animation Photography
Jammie Friday
B Camera Operators
Paul Hughen
Phil Lee
Video Playback
Video Images
Special Photographic Effects
VCE
Pete Kuran
Optical Line-up
Brian Griffin
Hotbook Animation Sequence
Pete Von Sholly
Jim Duffy
Editor
Terry Stokes
Production Designer
C.J. Strawn
Art Director
Timothy Gray
Art Department Co-ordinator
Michael Kraft
Set Decorator
James Barrows
Set Dressers
Anna Czerwinski
Ted Hardwick
Linda Syufy
Scenic Artists
Susan Misceovich
Mona Personius
Doug Anderson
Lead: Rick Rose
Storyboard Artist
Pete Von Sholly
Mechanical Effects
Co-ordinator:
Lou Carlucci
Additional:
Frank Ceglia

Music
Stanley Clarke
Music Supervisor
Bonnie Greenberg
Music Editor
Earl Ghaffari
Songs "Book of Love"
by Warren Davis,
George Malone,
Charles Patrick,
performed by (1)The
Monotones, (2) Ben E.
King, Bo Diddley; "One
Bourbon, One Scotch,
One Beer" by and
performed by John
Lee Hooker; "The Fool"
by Lee Hazlewood,
performed by Sanford
Clark; "Come Back My
Love" by Bobby
Mansfield, performed
by The Cardinals;
"Rocket 88" by Jackie
Brenston, performed
by Jackie Brenston
and His Delta Kings;
"Sincerely" by Harvey
Fugua, Alan Freed,
performed by The
Moonglows; "Hearts
of Stone" by Rudy
Jackson, Eddie Ray,
performed by The
Fontane Sisters;
"School Days" by and
performed by Chuck
Berry; "Little Darlin"
by Maurice Williams,
performed by The
Diamonds; "Rip It Up"
by Robert Blackwell,
John Marascalco,
performed by Little
Richard; "Why Do Fools
Fall in Love" by Frankie
Lymon, Morris Levy,
performed by The
Teenagers; "How
Can I Tell Her" by Jay
Livingston, Ray Evans,
performed by The Four
Freshman; "Be Bop A
Lula" by Gene Vincent,
Sheriff Tex Davis,
performed by Gene
Vincent; "What Can I
Do" by and performed
by Donnie Elbert;
"Earth Angel" by
Dootsie Williams,
performed by The
Penguins; "The Great
Pretender" by Buck
Ram, performed by The
Platters; "Let the Good
Times Roll" by Leonard
Lee, performed by
Shirley and Lee; "Hold
Me, Thrill Me" by
Harry Noble Jnr, "See
You Later Alligator"
by Robert Guidry,
"Graduation Day"
by Joe Sherman, Noel
Sherman, performed
by Big Daddy, Marty
"The K" Kaniger, Donny
"D" Raymond, John
"Spazz" Hutton, Bob
"Guido" Sandman,
"Rocka" Billy Block;
"Darktown Strutters
Ball" by Shelton
Brooks, "You Made
Me Love You" by Joseph
McCarthy, James
V. Monaco, performed
by The Sonny Paxson
Quartet; "The Good,
the Bad and the Ugly"
by Ennio Morricone;
"When Johnny Comes
Marching Home"
(trad.); "Waterwicks
and Windmills" by Nick
Glennie Smith; "Happy
Birthday to You" by

Mildred J. Hill, Patty S. Hill; "Fools Fall in Love" by Jerry Leiber, Mike Stoller, performed by The Drifters; "Fair Organ" by E. Warner; "The Maid in the Moon" (trad.); "Silver Moon" by R. King; "Dixie Stripper" by J. Scott

Choreography

Diana Lehan

Costume Design

Susie Desanto

Costume Supervisor

Yvonne Cervantes

Key Costumer

Shari Gray

Key Make-up

Suzanne Parker

Sanders

Additional Title Art

Paul Olsen

Titles/Opticals

Mercer Titles and

Optical Effects

Sound Editors

Tim Gedemer

Tony Berkeley

Ricardo Broadus

Brian Geer

Dialogue:

Terri Fiyalko

Joe Mayer

Sound Recordist

Jim Thornton

Foley Recordist

Rody Hassano

Dolby stereo

Post-sound Supervisor

Patrick M. Griffiths

Sound Re-recordists

Ken S. Polk

Ken Teaney

Sound Effects Designer

Harry Cohen

Foley Walkers

Joni Rowe

Hilda Hodges

Production Assistants

Jennifer Bly

Steven M. Coatney

Margaret Dillen

Mike McDuffee

Julie Kershenbaum

Julie Satterfield

Stunt Co-ordinator

Dan Bradley

Stunts

Scott Alan Cook

Jeff Haberstad

Brett Jones

Dean Miller

Patrick Joseph Moore

Denney Pierce

Erik Stabeneau

David Tillman

Stand-in

John Cato

Cast

Chris Young

Jack Twiller

Keith Coogan

Crutch Kane

Aeryk Egan

Peanut

Josie Bissett

Lily

Tricia Leigh Fisher

Gina Gaboosch

Danny Nucci

Spider Bomboni

John Cameron Mitchell

Floyd

Beau Dremann

Angelo Gaboosch

Jill Jaress

Mrs Twiller

John Achorn

Mr Twiller

Michael McKean

Adult Jack Twiller

Michael Cavalieri

Ubalдини

Gary Ellenberg

Drainpipe

Brent Fraser

Meatball

Lewis Arquette

Mr Malloy

Elizabeth Rainey

Wanda

Anna Berger

Mama Gaboosch

Madeleine Berger

Cleaning Lady

Bomboni

Donna Wilson

Mechanical Girl

Ritch Brinkley

Moving Van Driver

Brian Evans

Schank

Allison Barron

Sparta

Scarlet Bernard

Dove

Sylvie Spector

Bunny

Lin Shaye

Mrs Flynn

Rio Knott

Gypsy Girl

Clayton Landey

Snake

Jack McGee

Ticket Taker

Dana Craig

Diner Owner

Jeremy D. Lawrence

Dance Instructor

Delana Michaels

Teacher

Tom Platz

Body Builder

Leesa Rowland

Honeymoon

Bob Sweeney

Mr Snow

Joseph Svezia

Nazareth Pronka

Claudia Bloom

TV Actress

Cameron Perry

TV Actor

The Nickelodeons:

Randy Crenshaw

Kevin Dalby

Ken Neufeld

Bill New

Barbershop Quartet

Big Daddy:

John Hatton

Marty Kaniger

Don Raymond

Robert Sandman

Billy Bock

Prom Band

7,840 feet

87 minutes



A la recherche... Keith Coogan, Chris Young

camp for the summer.

When Lily and Angelo argue, it looks as if Lily might switch her affections to Jack. In preparation, he buys a second-hand convertible and watches James Dean in *East of Eden*, but is still too shy to ask her to the prom. When Jack's parents go away to a convention, he throws a party which gets out of hand, and Jack restores order with the gun he assumes to be a toy pistol. The gun goes off and everybody flees.

The prom is imminent, and Jack and Crutch still have to find partners. Lily has already arranged to go with Angelo. Jack plucks up courage and asks Gina, Angelo's sister, to accompany him. Much to Angelo's displeasure, she agrees. At the prom, Jack and Gina dance cheek to cheek. They drive into the mountains and make love in the back seat of the convertible. After the prom, Jack meets his friends in a diner at dawn, and they go for one last jaunt in the car. Back in the present, Jack explains that he married Lily, but the marriage broke up. He returns to his home town to find Gina.

"The book of love is a book which is written in the heart of every horny teenager". Thus opens Robert Shaye's film, one more in an endless line of Hollywood pictures celebrating the growing pains, first car and first kiss of the 50s American adolescent male. Adapted from a William Kotzwinkle novel, this essay in denim-tinted nostalgia occupies a middle ground between tasteful evocation of lost youth - which posits the turbulent teen years as precious, soul-searching prelude to the compromises of adult life - and jockish, rednecked remembrance of prurience past.

This modest picture bumbles along amiably, accompanied by a Greatest Hits of the 50s soundtrack, as it retraces the path of *Happy Days*, *American Graffiti* and their various offspring. The tension between restraint and excess, between naivety and gross

manly cynicism, is encapsulated in the character of Jack Twiller (Chris Young), who never seems quite sure whether he wants to be James Dean, Pat Boone, Mickey Rooney or a combination of all three. This mood of uncertainty extends to the film's formal structure, which, though generally naturalistic, is subject to occasional stylistic tics and quirks: calendar girls come to life; Mr Atlas steps forth from the pages of a magazine to tell Jack that he needs to improve his physique; and Jack's Walter Mitty fantasies are depicted.

In one of the funniest moments, Jack gazes in rapture at James Dean in *East of Eden*, and then, with the help of a leather jacket and a little Brylcreem, transforms himself from geek into posturing, mumbling rebel. Just so we know that *Book of Love* has a respectable literary dimension, one of Jack's friends walks around in a silk dressing gown reading e.e. cummings' poetry. But to reassure us that the film is not taking itself too seriously, another friend, the lewd, crude and mildly psychotic Spider, masturbates to a frenzied climax as the English teacher reads the class an extract from *Moby Dick* ("There she blows! There she blows!").

"As we grow older our hormones grow bolder", a voice-over tells us as the boys crank themselves up in search of sexual adventure. It does seem that the rites-of-passage movie is exclusively preoccupied with boys' experiences. It is no surprise that in *Book of Love*, the girls exist, along with the cars, as mysterious objects to goggle at and tinker with, not as characters in their own right. The strength of the film is its tender recreation of the 50s, an era which contemporary US film-makers seem to regard as some kind of Avalon. Shaye steers a steady course between *Diner*-like introspection and *Animal House* exuberance to produce a brisk, funny picture which almost overcomes the sense of *déjà vu*.

Geoffrey Macnab

The Cutting Edge

USA 1992

Director: Paul M. Glaser

Certificate

PG

Distributor

UIP

Production Company

Interscope

Communications

For Metro-Goldwyn-

Mayer

Producers

Ted Field

Karen Murphy

Robert W. Cort

Co-producers

Dean O'Brien

Cynthia Sherman

Production Co-ordinator

Nan Skiba

Unit Production Managers

Dean O'Brien

Susan Murdoch

Location Manager

Fred Kamping

Location Co-ordinator

Randy Castleman

Post-production

Co-ordinator

Beccie Hilliard

Casting

Marci Liroff

Toronto:

Deirdre Bowen

Extras:

Anne Masson

Scott Mansfield

Assistant Directors

Martin Walters

Ken A. Smith

Michael Crain

Megan Banning

Screenplay

Tony Gilroy

Director of Photography

Elliot Davis

Colour

DeLuxe

Camera Operator

Jon Cassar

Editor

Michael E. Polakow

Production Designer

David Gropman

Art Director

Dan Davis

Set Decorator

Steve Shewchuk

Art Department

Co-ordinator

Jackie Field

Set Dressers

Denis Kirkham

Roger Baron

Production Illustrator

Eric Ramsey

Head Scenic Artist

Guenter Bartlik

Special Effects

Co-ordinator

David Lemmen

Music

Patrick Williams

Orchestrations

Edward M. Karam

Synthesizer Programmer

Charles Pollard

Music Supervisors

Tim Sexton

Becky Mancuso

Music Editor

Christopher Kennedy

Songs

"Cry All Night" by

Patrick Sugg, Dean

Ortega, Scott Garrett,

Gary Lee, performed

by Neverland; "Street

of Dreams" by Carl

Sturken, Evan Rogers,

performed by Nia

Peebles; "Diddley

Daddy" by Ellas

McDaniel, Harvey

Fuqua, performed

by Chris Isaak; "Ride

on Time" by Dan

Hartman, Mirko

Limoni, Daniele Davoli,

Valerio Semplici,

performed by Black Box; "Groove Master" by Alphonsus Cassell, performed by Arrow; "Lauretta" by Malcolm McLaren, Robbie Kilgore, performed by Malcolm McLaren; "Love Shack" by Frederick Schneider, Catherine Pierson, Keith Strickland, Cindy Wilson, performed by Rosemary Butler; "Walking the Dog" by Rufus Thomas, performed by John Townsend; "It Ain't Over Till It's Over" by Lenny Kravitz, performed by Rosemary Butler, John Townsend; "Auld Lang Syne" (trad.) performed by Rosemary Butler, Warren Wiebe; "Shame Shame Shame" by Jimmy Reed, performed by Johnny Winter; "Turning Circles" by Danny O'Keefe, Jay Gruska, performed by Sally Dworsky; "The Race" by Boris Blank, Dieter Meier, performed by Yello; "Baby Now I" by Dan Reed, performed by The Dan Reed Network; "I've Got Dreams to Remember" by Otis Redding, Zelma Redding, Joe Rock, performed by Delbert, McClinton; "Feels Like Forever - Theme from The Cutting Edge" by Diane Warren, Bryan Adams, performed by Joe Cocker

Choreography
Robin Cousins

Costume Design
William Ivey Long

Wardrobe
Supervisor:
Patti Unger

Master:
Arthur Rowsell

Key Make-up Artist
Irene Kent

Prosthetics Make-up
Fran ois Dagenais

Title Design
Saxon/Ross Film Design

Titles/Opticals
Pacific Title

Supervising Sound Editors
Mark P. Stoelckinger
Lon E. Bender

Sound Editors
David Baldwin
Victor Iorillo
Mike Hoskinson
Glenn T. Morgan
Chris Hogan
Louis Kleinman

Supervising ADR Editor
Gregg Baxter

ADR Editors
Andrew London
Laura Graham

Sound Recordists
David Lee
Music: Dennis Sands
Dolby stereo

Sound Re-recordists
Wayne Heitmann
Robert Thirwell
Aaron Rochin

Foley Artist
Evelyn Hokanson

Skating Sounds
Carol Fortini
Cathy Polanski

Technical Advisers
Skating:
Robin Cousins

When a childhood friend leaves a message on his answering machine, Jack

Hockey:
Jack White
Production Assistant
Office:
Stephen Corcoran
Stunt Co-ordinator
Branko Racki
Stunt Skaters
John Denton
Sharon Carz
Tony Paul
Terry Pagano
Colin Vander Veen
Roman Halko
Branko Racki
Allison Reid
Amy Sirota

Cast
D. B. Sweeney
Doug Dorsey
Moir Kelly
Kate Moseley
Roy Dotrice
Anton Pamchenko
Terry O'Quinn
Jack Moseley
Dwier Brown
Hale
Chris Benson
Walter
Kevin Peeks
Brian
Barry Flatman
Tuttle
Rachelle Ottley
Lorie
Steve Sears
Spindler
Nahanni Johnstone
German Girl
Michael Hogan
Doctor
R. D. Reid
Calgary Cop
Dick Grant
Melanie Miller
Olympic
Commentators
Judy Blumberg
Robin Cousins
Nationals
Commentators
Chick Roberts
Drunk
Edwin Stephenson
Costumer
Arthur Rowsell
Assistant Costumer

Jojo Starbuck
Interviewer
France Gauthier
Roger Periard
French Officials
Graham Harley
Official
Pierre Peloquin
Peter Messaline
Maya Toman
International Reporters
Kirsten Kieferle
Woman in Bar
Sam Aaron
Man in Bar
Larry Armstrong
Frank Dooley
Linda Hanchar
Adrian Pellett
People in Bar
Rhys M. Berthiaume
Aerobics Instructor
Joanne Nisbett
Ballet Instructor
Robert Buck
Butler
The Skaters:
Tina Muir
Steve Sears
Nyman & Spindler
Christine Hough
Doug Ladret
Smilov & Brushkin
Krista Coady
Brian Geddes
Dubois & Gerdel
Penny Papaioannou
Raoul LeBlanc
Weideman Twins
Michelle Menzies
Kevin Wheeler
Yumez & Weaver
Patricia MacNeil
Cory Watson
Janice Yeck
Scott MacDonald
Nationals Pairs
Allison Gaylor
John Robinson
Kim Esdaille
Sean Rice
Haley Williams
John Jenkins
Olympic Pairs

9,158 feet
102 minutes



Renewed expectations: Moira Kelly, D. B. Sweeney

nor is Kate happy when Doug goes out for a night on the town. Picking up on the signs, Kate's fiancé calls off their engagement during the American National Championships. Kate and Doug's 'new wave' routine wins the hearts of the crowd but they only earn their place at the Alberville Olympics by default. Even their trainer admits that their long (artistic) programme is not good enough as it stands to beat the Russian European champions. He proposes a radical solution, an innovative but dangerous manoeuvre he has been working on for twenty years: the 'Pamchenko'.

At the Olympics, the couple argue just before they enter the rink for the short programme. They execute a cold, proficient display which leaves much to do in the long programme. Kate acknowledges her culpability and decides to retire from the sport. Doug is shattered, and while the world waits for their long programme he declares his love. This time their routine is exciting and passionate, the Pamchenko is a triumph, and it ends with an authentic embrace. The medal is theirs.

According to the production notes, the genesis of *The Cutting Edge* lies with producer Robert Cort, inspired while he watched a televised pairs figure skating competition: "To me, it's the closest thing we have today to the classic Fred Astaire/Ginger Rogers type of dancing... after watching one particularly talented pair all I could think was, 'Wow, they were great... what if they really hated each other?'" From this, screenwriter Tony Gilroy has dextrously woven a screwball love-hate relationship into a formula sports movie structure (training; qualifying; winning), in which the rich bitch/average Joe romance is no less predictable (mutual loathing turns imperceptibly to love), with laboured comic scenes highlighting their natural antipathy (she appreciates Mozart; he digs rock).

Gilroy has, however, rooted his story in an unexpected source. When Kate

and Doug exchange Christmas gifts, he gives her an all-star's ice hockey shirt, and she gives him Dickens' *Great Expectations*. Picked out of the gutter and transplanted to a life of wealth and renewed opportunity, Doug is a modern American Pip. A vain, beautiful young lady who has been moulded with a single-minded determination (here, to win an Olympics medal), Kate is Estella. And Jack Moseley - Kate's mentor, who has brought up his daughter to take the place of his long-dead wife - must be Miss Havisham.

Not surprisingly, Gilroy cannot accommodate a character of Miss Havisham's stature adequately in Robert Cort's scheme of things, and for all the connotations Terry O'Quinn (*The Stepfather*) brings to the role, Jack remains an undeveloped figure; even the exact nature of his bereavement remains obscure. For the young lovers, of course, we have Dickens with a new, improved, up-beat ending: Pip finally gets his girl, and a gold medal to boot.

The hockey shirt is a more significant factor. Figure skating's emphasis on display and aesthetics makes it tangential to most competitive sports, so that the sports movie clichés played here don't quite fit.

Furthermore, while Paul M. Glaser and his cameraman Elliot Davis use a whole panoply of different lenses, film stocks and speeds to convey a dramatic impression of steel on ice, it is also obvious that they are camouflaging their leads' technical shortcomings: Robert Cort's Fred and Ginger can't dance! To instil some spurious excitement, the film-makers fall back on thoroughly unconvincing live sports commentary ("There's history being made out there!"), and introduce 'the Pamchenko', a bold, borderline-legal manoeuvre invented by Kate's Russian trainer Anton Pamchenko, a move that resembles nothing so much as throwing the hammer, with Kate as the hammer. With this gloriously farfetched finale, *The Cutting Edge* finally disarms all criticism.

Tom Charity

Def by Temptation

USA 1990

Director: James Bond III

Certificate
18
Distributor
BFI
Production Company
Bonded Enterprises, Inc
Executive Producers
Charles Huggins
Kevin Harewood
Nelson George
Producer
James Bond III
Co-producers
Kervin Simms
Hajna O. Moss
Production Office
Co-ordinator
Robin Downes
Production Manager
Christina Diaz Norman
Post-production
Supervision
The Troma Team
Casting
Bonded Enterprises
Hush Management
Assistant Directors
Marcus Turner
Tyrone M. Henderson
Screenplay
James Bond III
Director of Photography
Ernest Dickerson
Colour
Technicolor
Opticals
Film Opticals
Editors
Li-Shin Yu
Additional:
Brian O'Hara
Associate Editor
Stefan Harshman
Production Designer
David Carrington
Art Director
Marc Henry Johnson
Paintings
Jeff Robinson
Special Effects
Rob Benevides
Additional:
Pericles Lewnes
Select Effects
Music/Music Performed by
Paul Laurence
Executive Music Producers
Beau Huggins
James Bond III
Music Supervisor
James Bond III
Music Production
Co-ordinator
Weldon Cochran
Music Editor
David Ouimet
Songs
"All Over You" by Michael Day, Thom Bishop, Rocky Maffit, performed by Freddie Jackson; "Hungry for Me Again" by and performed by Nicholas Ashford, Valerie Simpson; "Face to Face" by Janice Dempsey, Bruce Purse, performed by Melba Moore; "Najee's Def Theme" by Najee, Fareed, performed by Najee; "Fool" by Janice Dempsey, James McKinney, Darryl Dash, Lou Humphries,

performed by Paul Laurence; "In a Sexy Mood" by John Whitehead, Larry Gold, Jerry Cohen, performed by Eric Gable; "What Makes You Feel That Way About Me" by Arte Zamora, Mike Carpenter, Eric Strickland, performed by Z'Looke; "In and Out" by Marc London, performed by Paid 'N' Full; "On a Mission" by Richard "D" Drain, Jerome "Dasez" Scott, James Bond III, performed by Dasez Tempo; "Sex and the Single Man" by Mark Plaza, James Bond III, performed by Slick Love

Cynthia Bond's Wardrobe
Elden Glover
Make-up
Matiki Anoff
Special Make-up Effects
Christina Bone
Sound Editor
Ron Kalish
Sound Recordists
Charles R. Hunt
Music:
Daryl Shepherd
Sound Re-recorder
Jack Cooley
Production Assistants
Kenneth August
Carpenter
Elliot Wilson
Anthony Ogburn
Morenike Macaulay
Set:
Spencer McAdams

Cast
James Bond III
Joel
Kadeem Hardison
K
Bill Nunn
Doug
Samuel L. Jackson
Minister Garth
Minnie Gentry
Grandma
Rony Clanton
Married Man
Stephen Van Cleef
Jonathan
John Canada Terrell
Guy Davis
Bartenders
Cynthia Bond
Tempress
Freddie Jackson
Najee
Themselves
Melba Moore
Madam Sonya
Z Wright
Young Joel
Michael Rivera
Gay Guy
Sundra Jean Williams
Mrs Garth
Beth Latty
Angela Stokes
Lahaina Kameha
Michael Michelle
Robin Harmon
Starlina Young
Women
Ellis Williams
Demon Limo Driver

8,515 feet
95 minutes

New York. In an uptown singles bar, an inhuman temptress picks up a succession of willing men, luring them back to her apartment, where she seduces them and then either drinks their blood, infects them with Aids or destroys their souls. In North Carolina, Joel, a divinity student, dreams of the mysterious woman who caused the death of his minister father. Brought up by his religious grandmother, Joel is about to take his vows and become a minister himself, but first he wants to visit New York to see "K", his childhood friend, who has become an actor. In the bar, K meets the temptress, but leaves to meet Joel before she can overpower him. K takes Joel to the bar, and the temptress comes on strong to the young man. K talks with Dougy, a bar-room bore who turns out to be a detective on the trail of the temptress, who is implicated in a string of murders. K and Dougy consult Madam Sonya, a psychic who tells them that the temptress is the incarnation of evil and can only be destroyed by faith in God.

However, the temptress, who is still aggressively pursuing the naive Joel, momentarily possesses Sonya and warns K and Dougy not to intervene. K and Dougy persuade a bartender to slip the temptress a Mickey Finn laced with holy water, but he turns out to be in league with the succubus and both K and Dougy are destroyed by the creature. The temptress tries to inveigle Joel into her bed, but his grandmother, who has been warned by K, arrives to battle for her charge. While the temptress tries to kill the grandmother, Joel picks up a crucifix and faces down the succubus, who is consumed by the power of God. A short time later, Dougy, transformed into the male equivalent of the temptress, returns to the bar and starts to chat up a woman.

The blossoming new black cinema is gradually reclaiming the generic territory seeded by the 70s wave of blaxploitation pictures. While *New Jack City* redrafted the parameters of *Shaft* and *Superfly*, *Def by Temptation* returns to the potentially rich area of black horror first colonised by the absurd *Blacula* and then enhanced by

more interesting, albeit marginal, pieces like Bill Gunn's *Ganja and Hess*. The guiding spirit of Spike Lee is also in evidence: the opening sequence, in which a black bartender spels on the phone to a succession of girlfriends before succumbing to the wiles of the temptress, seems to have strayed in from *She's Gotta Have It*, while later bar-room encounters, preceding the 'feeding' scenes between the shape-changing temptress and her victims, have the feel of a black version of *Cheers*.

This sharp, funny and borderline creepy socio-sexual horror story continues with a series of ambiguous scenes in the temptress' red-sheeted four-poster as she disposes of sundry victims, either in the approved vampire fashion or in more bloody, bizarre manner. On one occasion, she seduces a mainly gay muscle-man into a straight encounter, only to penetrate him anally by (it is implied) growing outside male sexual equipment. Later, she develops fangs borrowed from Fredric March's Mr Hyde and serpent eyes like those of Jacqueline Pearce in *The Reptile*. The first wrong note is sounded by the fumbling married man the temptress infects with Aids: the yoking of vampire themes with HIV is no doubt destined to become a cliché of the 90s vampire movie. And then, when Joel arrives in the city and becomes the focus of the plot, the film starts to unravel.

The scenes between Joel and his actor friend are marvellously written and played in a Spike Lee, semi-improvised manner, but the central opposition between the naive Joel and the inhuman temptress is disappointing, linked as it is to conventional, reactionary values. The complex, amoral world of the bar and bedroom gives way to a backward-looking moralism that allows for a traditional (albeit in extreme form) vampire movie finish in which faith conquers all and the temptress is reduced to smoking bones by the cross and Joel's unshakeable faith. Logical lapses, such as bringing in grandmother from North Carolina just to intervene in the climax, seem to indicate the film-makers' belief that horror movies no longer have to make narrative sense to win an audience.

Kim Newman



She's gotta have it: Cynthia Bond

Double X

United Kingdom 1991

Director: Shani S. Grewal

Certificate

15

Distributor

Feature Film Company

Production Company

String of Pearls

Executive Producer

Noel Cronin

Producer

Shani S. Grewal

Line Producer

Edward Joffe

Production Co-ordinator

Julie Singleton

Production Manager

Tony Annis

Location Manager

Jeremy Johns

Casting

Nigel Burgess

Additional:

Screenlife

Assistant Directors

Quenton D. Annis

Julian Hearne

Jeremy Johns

Screenplay

Shani S. Grewal

Based in part

on a short story

"Vengeance" by

David Fleming

Director of Photography

Dominique Grosz

Colour

Technicolor

Camera Operators

Martin Testar

2nd Unit:

Gordon Hender

Alex Melman

Steadicam Operators

John Ward

Simon Bray

Special Optical Effects

Lightspeed

Editor

Michael Johns

Production Designer

Colin Pocock

Art Director

Bill Crutcher

Special Effects Supervisors

Jim Francis

Bill Pearson

Special Effects

Vendetta FX

Steve Paton

Neil Champion

Paul Gorrie

Neil Davies

Darren May

Music

Raf Ravenscroft

Songs

"Wait for Love" by

Hugo Longden, Sean

Maher, Matthew Best,

performed by Pressure

Point, Debbie French;

"Pud One" by Hugo

Longden, Sean Maher,

Matthew Best; "Iggy's

Place", "Symphony in S

Minor", "Brief Liaison",

"Sarah's Song", "Double

X - The Name of the

Game" by Raf

Ravenscroft, Foster

Patterson; "Give It

Your Best" by Raf

Ravenscroft, Julian

Littman; "I've Been

Waiting" by Raf

Ravenscroft, Julian

Littman, performed by

Julian Littman; "Shoot

the Witness" by Chris

Ames, performed by

The Strangers

Costume Design

Andrew Edwards

John Cowell

Wardrobe Supervisor

Kim Baker

Make-up Design

Sheelagh Wells

Title Design

Ros & Danny Boon

Sound Editors

Alfie Cox

Dialogue:

Stan Fiferman

Sound Recordists

Simon Clark

ADR:

Doug Hurring

Dolby stereo

Sound Re-recordist

Rupert Scrivener

Foley Artists

John Fell

Julie Ankerson

Production Assistant

Michael Harm

Stunt Co-ordinator

Terry Forrestal

Stunts

Gerry Crampton

Steve Dent

Tracey Eddon

Terry Forrestal

Nick Gillard

Vincent Keane

Philip Loneragan

Wayne Michaels

Paul Weston

Stand-in

Martin Seal

Armourer

Hills Small Arms

International

Ordnance Company

Cast

Simon Ward

Edward Ross

William Katt

Michael Cooper

Norman Wisdom

Arthur Clutton

Bernard Hill

Iggy Smith

Gemma Craven

Jenny Eskridge

Leon Herbert

Ollie

Chloe Annett

Sarah

Derren Nesbitt

Minister

Vladek Sheybal

Pawnbroker

Terry Forrestal

Swarthy Man

Steve Carlow

Detective

Roger Law

Foreman

Clifford Predgen

Prisoner

Rod Stenna

Associate

Elwin A. David

Ian Worrel

Ross' Bodyguards

Victoria Nairn

Hotel Receptionist

Iggy Navarro

Dungeon Guard

Robert Joyce

BR Attendant

Kenneth Lindsay

Waiter

Morag Owen

Eurodollar Agent

Michael Mairic-Smith

Helicopter Pilot

Bob Vowles

Henchman

8,770 feet

97 minutes

American tourist Michael Cooper, late of the Chicago Police Department, befriends Morris Rigby, a fellow hotel guest in the Scottish coastal village of Port Patrick. When a bomb threatens Rigby's life, Cooper comes to the rescue. During the ride, Rigby narrates his story...

Under the name Arthur Clutton, he was formerly the safecracker in a gang, the Organisation, run by property dealer Edward Ross. Sickened by the gang's violence, mostly perpetrated by Ross' lieutenant Iggy Smith, the widowed Clutton planned to escape to America with his daughter Sarah and girlfriend Jenny following a bank-vault raid. The scheme backfired when Jenny (the Organisation's secretary) alerted Iggy. Sarah was captured, though Clutton escaped the Organisation's clutches and spent three years on the run... Cooper's car runs out of petrol, and the two take refuge in a ruined church.

When Cooper agrees to help rescue the still-imprisoned Sarah, Clutton gives him details of two sets of incriminating documents: one left with a solicitor, who can be contacted through the codename "Double X", the other left in a railway-station luggage locker. Armed with this information, Cooper (a contract killer hired by the Organisation) shoots Clutton dead, and hands over the solicitor's documents to his bosses. But uneasy about his betrayal of Clutton, Cooper rescues Sarah, and arranges to meet Iggy to sell him the second set of documents. After telling Sarah that Cooper was her father's killer, Iggy stabs Cooper and snatches the girl away.

Cooper traces them to Ross' estate, where a party is under way to celebrate Ross' grandiose plans to build cities across the world. Cooper is killed in the fracas. Sarah tells Ross that a third set of documents had already been sent to the Serious Crime Squad. Realising that the game is up, Ross escapes by helicopter with Iggy and a case of money. But Iggy pushes out his master, who falls to his death on a scale model of one of his dream cities.

Spectacularly impoverished both in content and style, this tawdry tale of dishonour among thieves marks an inauspicious beginning for the film-making activities of the Business Expansion Scheme. Shani S. Grewal, the writer-producer-director, has managed to turn back the clock to the bad old heyday of the British supporting feature, complete with an imported American (William Katt) and abundant but dull location work.

Norman Wisdom tries harder than most, returning to cinema after a prolonged absence as a downtrodden mouse struggling to get free of the Organisation's grip. For his pains, he is given lines like, "I can set the level of radioactivity in the pellets, outside the range of their sensors!" Any entertainment on offer is mostly provided by Bernard Hill as Iggy the sadist, with a limp, a fruity Irish accent, and a stiletto blade hidden in his stick.

Geoff Brown

The Five Heartbeats

USA 1991

Director: Robert Townsend

Certificate

15

Distributor

20th Century Fox

Production Company

20th Century Fox

Executive Producer

Robert Townsend

Producer

Loretha C. Jones

Co-producer

Nancy Israel

Associate Producers

Kokayi Ampah

Christina Schmidlin

Production Office

Co-ordinator

Diane Gutterud

Production Manager

Nancy Israel

Location Managers

Kokayi Ampah

Kojo Lewis

Casting

Jaki Brown

ADR Voice:

Barbara Harris

Co-ordinator:

Darin D. Brown

NY Associate:

Michael G. Abrams

Additional NY

Associate:

Sarah Hyde-Hamlet

Midwest:

Chemin Sylvia Bernard

Extras:

Ima Sumac Rosario

Assistant Directors

Richard A. Wells

Sandra Middleton

Screenplay

Robert Townsend

Keenen Ivory Wayans

Director of Photography

Bill Dill

Colour

DeLuxe

Camera Operators

Joseph Calloway

Additional:

Phil Carr-Foster

Chris Hayes

John Simmons

Phil Waters

Steadicam Operators

Kirk Gardner

Liz Ziegler

Video

Betacam Director:

Yule Caise

VHS Director:

Suzanne Suter

Camera:

Dasal Banks

Sound:

Brad Marshall

Editor

John Carter

Production Designer

Wynn Thomas

Art Director

Don Diers

Art Department

Co-ordinator

Erik Knight

Set Decorators

Samara Schaffer

Susan Raney

Key Set Dresser

Chris Carlson

Set Dressers

Kai Blumberg

James Hurd

Robert Evangelisto

Tim James

Michael Sweeney

Brian Polk

Cindy Johnson

On-set:

Jennifer Dawson

Draughtswoman

Judith Wyle

Scenic Artists

Carole Lee Davis

Leslie Dicker

Wendy Gayner

Ethan Jenkins

Stacey Lande

Roger Nall

Karen Sorum

Storyboard Artist

Carl Aldana

Music

Stanley Clarke

Supervising Music

Producers

Steve Tyrell

George Duke

Music Editors

David Slusser

Adam Smalley

Songs

"I've Never Felt This

Good" by Tena Clark,

performed by Kim

Kassira; "I Love Joey"

by Michael Baker, Aisha

Ahmad, performed by

Babydoll & the

Crystals;(lead vocals)

Troy Beyer; "Are You

Ready for Me" by

Bruce Sudano, Eddie

Hokenson, "Down for

the Count" by Norman

Harris, Alfonse Kettner,

Steven Moos,

performed by Flash

& the Ebony Sparks,

(lead vocals) Demetrius

Harvey; "Nothing But

Love" by Mark Scola,

Doug Shawe, "A Heart

is a House for Love" by

Tristan Sigerson, Davitt

Sigerson, Bob Thiele

Jnr, "Nights Like This"

by Jesse W. Johnson,

Keith Lewis, performed

by The Five Heartbeats,

(lead vocals) Billy

Valentine; "Stay in

My Corner" by Wade

Flemons, Bobby Miller,

Barrett Strong,

"Oh What a Night"

by Marvin Junior, John

Funches, performed

by The Dells; "Ready

Or Not, Here I Come",

"Didn't I Blow Your

Mind", "La La Means

I Love You" by Thomas

Bell, William Hart,

performed by The

Delfonics; "Cole"

by Tabou Combo,

performed by Juan

Minayor; "9:20 Special"

by Earl Warren, Bill

Engwick, performed

by The Five Heartbeats

Orchestra; "Baby Stop

Running Around" by

Michael Baker, Aisha

Ahmad, performed by

Bird and the Midnight

Falcons, (lead vocals)

Michael Baker; "Shake

Me Wake Me (When It's

Over)", "It's the Same

Old Song" by Brian

Holland, Lamont

Dozier, Edward

Holland, performed

by The Four Tops; "We

Haven't Finished Yet"

by Tena Clark, Gary

Prim, performed by

(1)Duck's Baby Sister,

(lead vocals) Tressa

Thomas, (2)Patti

Labelle, Billy Valentine,

Tressa Thomas;

"America" performed

by Duck, (lead vocals)

Robert Townsend;

"Amazing Grace"

performed by Jennifer

Holiday; "In the

Middle" by K. Jones,

K. Salas, D. Austin,

K. Phillips, performed

by Flash and the Five

Heartbeats, (lead

vocals) Demetrius

Harvey; "Just in Case"

by Tena Clark,

performed by Flash

& the Five Heartbeats,

(lead vocals) Howard

Johnson, Demetrius

Harvey; "Carry On"

by Kipper Jones, Reggie

Stewart, performed by

Kipper Jones; "Bring

Back the Days" by

Jon Nettlesbey, Terry

Coffey, performed by

U.S. Male; "I Feel Like

Going On" by Rance

Allan, Thomas Allen,

Steven Allen,

performed by Eddie

King Jnr, Babydoll,

(lead vocals) Billy

Valentine, Jackie

Smiley; "Happy

Birthday" by Mildred

J. Hill, Patty S. Hill,

performed by The Five

Heartbeats, Brenda,

Tanya; "You Can Kiss

Where the Sun Don't

Shine" by Jesse W.

Johnson, Keith Lewis,

performed by Jesse

W. Johnson; "Aladdin's

Scratch" by Malcolm

McLaren, performed

by The World Famous

Supreme Team

Choreography

Michael Peters

Costume Design

Ruthe Carter

Associate Costume Design

Ceci

Wardrobe Supervisor

Darlene Jackson

Costumers

April Hunter

Darryl Johnson

John K. Lemons

Shirlene Williams

Make-up

Key:

Laini Thompson

Artist:

Edna Mae Sheen

Diahann Carroll:

Susan Cabral

Supervising Sound Editor

Richard Hymns

Sound Editors

Sara Bolder

Rob Fruchtman

Michael Silvers

Foley Editor

Mary Helen Leasman

Sound Recordist

David Brownlow

ADR Recordist

Chris Tucker

Foley Recordist

Tom Myers

Dolby stereo

Sound Re-recordists

Tom Johnson

Gary Summers

Sound Effects Editor

Ken Fischer

Foley Artists

Marnie Moore

Dennie Thorpe

Technical Advisers

The Dells

Production Assistants

Matthew Altman

Marsha Cole

Beverlyn Fray

Lota Hairston-Hadley

Carol Hunt

Neil Klindworth

Regina McLeod

Recoe Walker

Post-production:

Glenn Bell

Mia Farrell

Joanne Higgins

Editorial:

Donald Rounds

Wardrobe:

Angela Dashielle

Solomon Wise

Stunt Co-ordinators

John Sherrod

Additional:

</

which sets it apart. Townsend initially envisaged the three-year project as a musical comedy, centred on the adventures of the band who appeared briefly in Walter Hill's *Streets of Fire*. In the process of researching this whimsical piece, Townsend spent some time with longstanding soul act The Dells, and became intrigued by the "darker dramas" behind the 60s and 70s pop scene. This strange evolution has led to a somewhat schizophrenic movie which encompasses comic set-pieces, the odd fantasy sequence (for example, a scene in which Duck and his sister dance around a bedroom assembling off-cut lines of poetry from which a song is magically formed), and a harshly realistic account of the battles behind the glamour of pop stardom.

It is in this latter arena that the film excels: from the inevitable internal traumas of the band on the road, to the effects of drug abuse, and the desperation of the anonymous promiscuity which comes with fame. Crucially, Townsend is far from unaware of the swiftly changing tone of his episodic film, and uses jarring juxtaposition to fine effect. In one terrifying sequence, following a scene in which Anthony 'scores' for the first time, unscrupulous record executive Big Red is approached by an artist who complains that his royalties are late, and is promptly hung head-first out of a window.

Townsend also efficiently highlights the theme of an underlying racism without having to resort to soap-box preaching. At an early stage in their career, the Heartbeats are offered a publishing deal under which their songs will be re-recorded for a mass (white) audience by a WASP, woolly-sweatered group called The Five Horsemen. Later, the band are disgusted to learn that their debut album, "Together Forever", has been issued with a cover depicting an all-white family. "Negroes and white folks will be buying this album", explains Red, insisting that the group see "the big picture", the 'cross-over' market. "Cross-over is just a double-cross", retorts one Heartbeat. "I've never seen five niggers on Elvis Presley's album covers!"

But by far the most powerful anti-racist statement in Townsend's subtly polemical film comes when the group are stopped by the police during a tour of Southern venues. Identifying themselves as singers, the band are forced to perform a chorus to the mocking amusement of the police, their humiliation captured with painful intimacy. In *Hollywood Shuffle*, Townsend masterfully pinpointed the racial prejudices of tinseltown which force black actors into marginal 'bad ass' or servant roles. Here he blends similar wit and poignant understatement to mount a powerful attack on the racist heritage of rock music, reminding us once again that the visibility of black entertainers in the mass media does not necessarily signal the arrival of equal rights.

Mark Kermode

The Gladiator

USA 1992

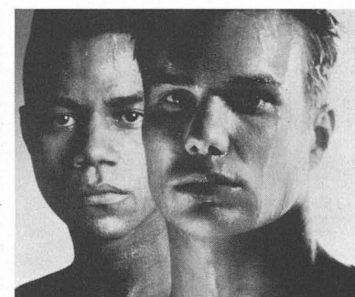
Director: Rowdy Herrington

Certificate 15
Distributor Columbia TriStar
Production Company Price Entertainment For Columbia Pictures
Producers Frank Price, Steve Roth
Production Co-ordinator Mary K. Perko
Unit Production Manager Kenneth Utt
Location Manager Bob Hudgins
Casting Amanda Mackey, Cathy Sandrich
Assistant Directors Christine Larson, John L. Roman, Michelle D'Angelo
Screenplay Lyle Kessler, Robert Mark Kamen
Story Djordje Milicevic, Robert Mark Kamen
Director of Photography Tak Fujimoto
Colour Technicolor
Camera Operator Gregory Lundsgaard
Video Operator Thomas E. Whalen
Editors Peter Zinner, Harry B. Miller III
Production Designer Gregg Fonseca
Art Director Bruce Miller
Set Design William Arnold
Set Decorator Jay R. Hart
Special Effects John D. Milinac
Music Brad Fiedel
Music Director Shirley Walker
Executive Music Producer Budd Carr
Music Editor Allan K. Rosen
Songs "Killer" by Seal, Adam Tinley, performed by Seal; "Gladiator" by Michael Berrin, Richard Lawson, Peter Nash, performed by 3RD Bass; "Da Me La (Fama)" by J. Batista, R. Blades, S. Campbell, S. Krywoschy, D. Ross, A. Rubalcava, D. Snyder, performed by Latin Science; "Welcome to the Real Life" by Sheryl Crow, Gary Bromham, performed by Lisa Lisa & Cult Jam; "Latin Till I Die (Oye Como Va)" by Tito Puente; "Rico Suave" by Gerardo, Christian Warren, performed by Gerardo; "Mama Said Knock You Out" by Marlon Williams, James Todd Smith, performed by L. L. Cool J.; "For the Love of Peace" by Timmy Thomas, Attrell Cordes, Rob Birch, Nick Hallam, performed by P. M. Dawn; "The Power" by Jani Lane; "We Will Rock You" by Brian May, performed by Warrant; "I Will Survive" by Cliff Magness, Steve Kipner,

performed by Cheap Trick; "Hold on Tight" by Curtis Williams, Sean Devoreaux, Janet Cole, performed by Tony Terry; "Count on Me" by and performed by Martin Page; "U Can't Touch This" by M. C. Hammer, Alonzo Miller, Rick James, performed by Hammer; "Pride (In the Name of Love)" by Adam Clayton, Paul David Hewson, Laurence Mullen, David Evans, performed by Clivillés & Cole
Costume Design Donfeld
Wardrobe Supervisor Cheryl A. Weber
Make-up Rodger Jacobs
Titles/Opticals Cinema Research Corporation
Supervising Sound Editors Stephen H. Flick, David A. Whittaker
Sound Editors John Dunn, Donald Flick, John Arrufat, Ron Bartlett, Geoffrey Rubay, Dean Beville, Mike Chock
Supervising ADR Editor Judée Flick
ADR Editors Andrea Horta, Dan Hegeman
Sound Recordists Glenn Williams
Music Tim Boyle
Dolby stereo
Sound Re-recordists Chris Carpenter, Rick Hart, Kevin E. Carpenter
Foley Joan Rowe
Gregg Barbanell
Fighters' Technical Consultant Ben Urquidez
Production Assistants Jeff Richmond, Michael Elyanow, W. Michael Phillips, Brian W. Boyd
Boxing Co-ordinator Jim Nickerson
Stunt Doubles Tierre Turner, David Burton

Cast
James Marshall Tommy Riley
Cuba Gooding Jr Lincoln
Brian Dennehy Jimmy Horn
Robert Loggia Pappy Jack
Ossie Davis Noah
Jon Seda Romano
Cara Buono Dawn
Lance Slaughter Shortcut
T. E. Russell Spits
Richard Lexsee Father in Park
Tab Baker
Dwain A. Perry Storm Troopers
Joan Schwenk Secretary

Raul Salinas
Marctwaine Nettles-Bey
Derek Anunciation Teens in Classroom
Francesca P. Roberts Miss Higgins
Emily Marie Hooper Belinda
Vonte Sweet Tidbits
Antoine Roshell Scarface
John Louis Williams School Guard
Anthony Fitzpatrick Kevin Casey
Collectors
Thomas Charles Simmons Leo
Laura Whyte Millie
Mary Flynn Jill Kiblinger
Mark Phillip Raff Teens in Diner
John Heard John Riley
Harve Kolzow Timekeeper
Jeon-Paul Griffin Black Death
Mik Scriba Virgil Strauss
John W. Wilson Brian O'Shea
Referees
Michael Glienna Black Death, Corner Man
Mike A. Burgos Odds Board Man
Kenneth Scott Coopwood Tony Glos
Johnny Lira Desi Singh
Bookies
David Burton Chilton Shellito
Bettors
James Ike Eichling Cop on Take
Debra Sandlund Charlene
Blake Dollard Heavyweight Fighter
Johnny Bellino Dawn's Father
Theron "Touche" Lykes Julian S. Campo
Bodyguards
David Spencer Perkins Fight Fan
Franklin Jones Ring Manager
Anthony "Primo" LaCassa Romano's Cornerman
Patrick Outlaw Lincoln's Opponent
Hector Pena Tommy's Opponent
Mike Nussbaum Doctor
John M. Watson Snr Hospital Patient
Jena Wynn Laura Lee
9,159 feet
102 minutes



Hedging: Cuba Gooding Jr., James Marshall

Tommy challenges him to a fight: if Tommy wins, he is free to go; if Horn wins, Tommy belongs to him. In a vicious, bare-knuckle fight, and despite an injured arm and Horn's dirty tactics, Tommy finally knocks out his heavier opponent.

A common boxing-movie scenario has been the story of a poor white fighter whose frustrated violence stems from his tough social milieu, but is also his sole means of escaping from it. Witness the role-life roles taken by Paul Newman in *Somebody Up There Likes Me* and Robert De Niro in *Raging Bull*, or Sylvester Stallone's fictional version in the *Rocky* series. However, as one of the fight promoters cynically remarks here, after reeling off a list of 'hungry' white champions from the past, "What do white kids need today, a haircut?" There is something contrived, then, about the way white, educated, lower-middle-class Tommy Riley gets involved in the world of illegal backstreet boxing, a world peopled in the main by disadvantaged Hispanic and black fighters.

The film also has to employ a lot of fancy footwork in order to negotiate the potentially racist overtones of Tommy being presented as "The Great White Hope" (which fight promoter Horn plays on in order to exploit existing racial tensions). Tommy's first fight against the hyperbolically named Black Death seems to signal the worst, but liberal bets are already being hedged: Lincoln's clean black fighter is clearly distinguished from the anti-social, cheating Shortcut.

In the course of the film, Tommy and Lincoln edge towards a friendship that transcends racial difference: both fighters drop their guard during the final fight, frustrating the designs of their mutual enemy, Horn, and the final image is one of reconciliation, a freeze frame of Lincoln and Tommy's clasped hands. Without straying from the well-oiled conventions of the boxing movie, Rowdy Herrington underpins the violent spectacle and choreographed fight scenes with authentic social detail and credible personal conflicts (after the sensational violence of *Road House*, this is a leaner slice of genre cinema). *Twin Peaks* star James Marshall makes a fine feature debut in a role that relies as much on understated emotional reactions as on physical violence, while Brian Dennehy and Robert Loggia bring some heavyweight talent to the proceedings.

Nigel Floyd

Den Goda Viljan (The Best Intentions)

Sweden 1992

Director: Bille August

Certificate
(Not yet issued)

Distributor
Artificial Eye

Production Company
Sveriges Television
SVT1 Drama

In association with
ZDF/Channel 4/
RAIDU/La Sept/DR/
YLE 2/NRK/RUV

Executive Producer
Ingrid Dahlberg

Producer
Lars Bjälkeskog

Production Manager
Elisabeth Liljeqvist

Unit Manager
Johann Zollitsch

Post-production Producer
Stefan Baron

Extras Casting
Yvonne Landström

Assistant Director
Stefan Baron

Screenplay
Ingmar Bergman

Director of Photography
Jörgen Persson

In colour

Camera Operator
Rolf Lindström

Editor
Janus Billeskov Jansen

Production Designer
Anna Asp

Music
Stefan Nilsson

Music Director
Esa-Pekka Salonen

Music Consultant
Björn Linnman

Music Performed by
The Swedish Radio
Symphony Orchestra

Costume Design
Ann-Mari Anttila

Make-up
Kjell Gustavsson

Titles
Optical Vision

Sound Editors
Lars Ulander
Ulf Darin
Stefan Ljungberg

Sound Recordists
Lennart Gentzel
Johnny Ljungberg
Owe Svensson

Cast
Samuel Fröler
Henrik Bergman
Pernilla August
Anna Bergman
Max von Sydow
Johan Åkerblom

Ghita Norby
Karin Åkerblom
Lennart Hjulström
Managing Director
Nordenson
Mona Malm
Alma Bergman
Lena Endre
Frida Strandberg
Keve Hjelm
Fredrik Bergman
Björn Kjellman
Ernst Åkerblom
Börje Ahlstedt
Carl Åkerblom
Hans Alfredson
Reverend Gransjö
Lena T. Hansson
Magda Säll
Anita Björk
Queen Viktoria
Elias Ringquist
Petrus Farg
Ernst Günther
Freddy Paulin
Marie Göransson
Elin Nordenson
Björn Granath
Oscar Åkerblom
Gunilla Nyroos
Svea Åkerblom
Mikael Segerström
Gustav Åkerblom
Eva Gröndahl
Martha Åkerblom
Sara Arnia
Mrs Johansson
Inga Landgré
Magna Flink
Emy Storm
Tekla Kronström
Barbro Kollberg
Gertrud Tallrot
Marie Rikardson
Marta Werkelin
Inga Alenius
Alva Nykvist
Roland Hedlund
Manager Nagel
Lena Brogren
Miss Lisen
Björn Gustafson
Jesper Jakobsson
Tomas Bolme
Jansson
Kåre Santesson
Måns Lagergren
Ingall Elling
Mejan
Gösta Prizelius
Count Sheriff
Ake Lagergren
Chamberlain
Segerward

16,279 feet
181 minutes

Subtitles

Uppsala, Sweden, 1909. Studying in near-poverty to be a priest, Henrik Bergman rejects a deathbed plea for reconciliation from his wealthy grandparents, who have made no effort to help him or his widowed mother, Alma. Invited to dinner by a friend, Ernst Åkerblom, he is fascinated by Ernst's sister, Anna, although he is already secretly engaged to a waitress, Frida. Learning of his interest in their greatly cherished daughter, Johan and Karin Åkerblom invite Henrik to join them in the country. Henrik and Anna become lovers, but Karin quickly disapproves of him, finds out



Seasonally muted: Pernilla August, Samuel Fröler, Björn Kjellman

about Frida, and firmly crushes the relationship. Although Frida herself intervenes on Henrik's behalf, Anna refuses to have anything further to do with him.

Two years pass. Henrik is ordained as a priest, while Anna, training to be a nurse, falls ill with tuberculosis and slowly recovers in a Swiss sanatorium. She writes to Henrik but her parents intercept the letter. While Karin is with her daughter on a convalescent holiday in Italy, news comes that Johan has died; heartbroken, Karin tells Anna about the letter and of Johan's disapproval of Karin's intervention. Anna promptly rejoins Henrik, announces their engagement, and accompanies him on a trip to inspect his new posting, the parsonage at Forsboda. Conditions are primitive, and Henrik and Alma quarrel fiercely over their wedding plans. But in March 1913, they are married in Uppsala Cathedral, watched with ill-concealed foreboding by both Karin and Alma.

At Forsboda, all goes well at first. Henrik is a success as a parson; Anna is invaluable as a nurse; they have a son, Dag, and provide a home for a disadvantaged child, Petrus. But Henrik clashes with Nordenson, owner of a local factory, who opposes his wife's wish that their daughters be confirmed, and resents any Church support for the factory workers in their struggle for better pay and conditions. Ernst comes for a visit, introduces the latest dance craze, and leaves Anna restless at their austere existence. An offer comes from the Queen to appoint Henrik Chaplain to the Royal Hospital in Stockholm, but to Anna's fury he turns it down, feeling he would be betraying his parish.

Ironically, rumours circulate in Forsboda that they are going to leave, and the parishioners begin to turn against them, encouraged by Nordenson's hostility. Petrus is narrowly stopped from trying to drown Dag, and has to be sent back to his closest relatives. Now pregnant again, and disillusioned at the failure of all their efforts, Anna takes Dag to stay with Karin in Uppsala while Henrik, his local problems solved by Nordenson's suicide, settles for a solitary life. Realising his mistake within a few months, he follows Anna to Uppsala and tells her he has accepted the Stockholm invitation. They are uneasily reunited shortly before the birth of their second son, Ernst Ingmar, in July 1918.

Some twenty years after the death of his parents, Bergman rediscovered them, he says, while preparing his autobiography *The Magic Lantern*, where they make fleeting appearances among the dark jumble of his memories. The main events of their pre-Ingmar life – an intense and troubled preface to a calamitous domestic régime – were pieced together from his conversations with them as new-found friend of their final days, the violent ordeals of upbringing at last forgiven. Predictably, however, the twenty-year gestation has yielded a compulsively manipulated history, names and events reshuffled every which way for the sake of dramatic convenience and effect.

If the official biographies are to be trusted, it was not – as Bergman's version proposes – a case of love at first sight between the young parents-to-be (who were second cousins, their families well known to each other), but a

matter of assiduous courtship of her by him. And it was his mother, not hers, who opposed the marriage, until he had a proper job – in a mining community from which they were both reluctant to move to Stockholm. And it was not until 1924, when Ingmar was six, that the Queen heard his father preach in Stockholm and invited him to be Chaplain to the Royal Hospital. Nobody has a better case than Bergman to make what he pleases of what he knows, but when he goes so far as to change his parents' names (Erik becomes Henrik and Karin becomes Anna, actually his grandmother's name), warning bells begin to ring. Names have always been precisely chosen in Bergman's work, and this calculated amendment suggests that imagination is as important as the truth in this reconstruction.

Bergman says he hoped that the exploration of his parents in *The Best Intentions* would throw fresh light on his own features as an amalgamation of them both, but with typical caution he has simply created yet another in his long, majestic output of intricately sculpted masks. Not quite documentary, not quite costumed melodrama, the film is a curious patchwork of emotional colours, full of hints and surprises without ever quite defining its own spectrum. Its selection of key moments in the life of Henrik and Anna has an increasingly arbitrary quality as though, once the first hurdles have been passed, many other examples of their later problems could have served equally well. At the same time, their struggle is tantalisingly nudged by fragments of other material, other characters who could have expanded the story far beyond the six

hours of its original TV running time.

Clearly there is more to know about the Nordenson episode (and Anna's reaction to it, since, when push comes to shove, she is more Nordenson's class than Henrik's). Another vital biography, haunting the fringes of the action, is that of Henrik's mother, whose tortured past, vividly introduced by the film's opening, is only briefly alluded to again. Like the bewildering collection of half-brothers in the Åkerblom family, or Max von Sydow's train-obsessed patriarch, or the strikingly poised and passionate Frida, these are lives clamouring to be examined in more detail. By contrast, the bizarre episode with Petrus, the spectral child whose presence lends the film a Gothic improbability, provides a macabre opportunity for suspense and violence without ever becoming integrated with the central issues.

Unarguably Bergman are the icily cruel moments when the protagonists of *The Best Intentions* unleash their hatred on each other in sudden unannounced honesty. The mellow Bergman, too, can be sensed in the scenes of family occasion, the crowded elegance of the dinner parties, the uninhibited celebration of Christmas. Moments which call for Bergman's visual touch, they are directed by Bille August with tact, restraint and a rather dampening lack of passion. The framing is always correct and unexceptionable, but never breathtakingly on the edge of risk, never unashamedly joyful or savage. It seems a sorry deprivation that Jörgen Persson (whose camera unfolded the idyll of *Elvira Madigan*) has here been permitted so little sunlight when Bergman's films, whatever their tone, were reliably punctuated with outbursts of summer.

August's pace, hustling through the seasons with quick, splendid shots of woodland and snowdrift, often suggests a reluctance to let the landscape do the talking: several magnificent glimpses, of a river at night or of a small train arriving through white mist, are hastily trimmed. The world of Henrik and Anna is one of artificiality and privation, of dying breaths in unheated rooms, of grey and gloomy quarrels amid furnishings of unyielding severity. Even the final scene of reunion places the couple on separate benches, awkward and helpless in a dismissive limbo.

That the story works, despite the uncertainty about its truth or its future, despite the gulfs that must be bridged by guesswork or indulgence, is due to the superb performances of Pernilla August and Samuel Frøler (whose hairline gradually assumes the shape of Bergman's) as the star-crossed pair. The editing of their glances, the scripting of their debates, but above all the rueful joy and pain in their eyes, scowls and smiles, carries a piercing reality which transcends the deceptions of history and drama. If Bergman's parents were indeed anything like this, they explain a lot.

Philip Strick

L'île au trésor (Treasure Island)

France/USA 1991

Director: Raúl Ruiz

Certificate

(Not yet issued)

Distributor

BFI

Production Companies

Les Films du Passage
(Paris)/Cannon
International
(Los Angeles)

Producer

Paolo Branco

Production Co-ordinator

Paulo de Sousa

Production Managers

Portugal:
Antonio Goncalo
Sénégal:
Nadine Perron

Assistant Directors

Philippe Grandrieux
Pierre Hodgson
José V. Da Silva

Screenplay

Raúl Ruiz

Based on the novel by
Robert Louis Stevenson

Director of Photography

Acacio de Almeida

In colour

Editor

Rodolfo Wedeles

Art Director

Maria-José Branco

Set Decorators

Madalena Poppe
Ana V. Da Silva
Alexandre Barradas

Special Effects

Télétrés

Music

Georges Arriagada

Costume Design

Isabel Branco

Make-up

Odile Fourquin

Sound Editor

Alain Garnier

Sound Recordist

Joaquim Pinto

Production Assistants

Joao Benard Da Costa
Antonio Semiao
Renato Santos
Carmo Canelas
Ana Costa
Angela Cerveira

Cast

Melvil Poupaud

Jonathan

Martin Landau

Old Captain

Vic Tayback

Silver

Lou Castel

Doctor/Father

Jeffrey Kime

Squire Timothy

Anna Karina

Mother

Sheila

Aunt Helen

Jean-François Stevenin

Israel Hands

Charles Schmidt

Blind Man

Jean-Pierre Léaud

Midasa

Yves Afonso

French Captain

Pedro Armendariz Jr

Mendoza

Tony Jensen

Ben Gunn

Michel Ferber

Crabb

10,350 feet

115 minutes

English version

Young Jonathan, who narrates the story as an adult, lives in the hotel Ballantrae with his parents. When a power cut interrupts his favourite television serial, about a group of mercenaries, he feels that the story is continuing in his own life. A mysterious Captain arrives at the hotel, followed by other strange visitors: a blind man who leaves a glass eye for the Captain, and a man in a white suit. Jonathan tells the Captain about the glass eye, and is chloroformed by him, waking to see the Captain beating up his father while his mother looks on. Jonathan retreats to his cave hide-away; he then meets the white-suited man, who explains that he is a writer, who writes "what happens to others".

At the hotel, Jonathan's father interrupts a tryst between his wife and the Captain, but their conflict dissolves in laughter. The next night, the blind man returns with Crabb and Israel Hands, old associates of the Captain's, and beats Jonathan mercilessly. After his father fakes a suicide attempt, Jonathan runs away and meets Silver, a cobbler turned cook, who takes him to his restaurant, the Hispaniola, where Jonathan is visited by Israel Hands, who claims to be his real father. Jonathan arrives home just in time for his father's funeral; he wakes in bed to find himself being tended by a doctor,

his father's exact double, who is staying in the hotel with an English squire. The dying Captain, who also claims to be Jonathan's father, leaps out of the window during an earthquake, and Jonathan realises that the figures around him are characters from an interrupted serial.

After Jonathan's mother is arrested, the Doctor and the Squire hire a French captain to help them find the treasure indicated in the book *Treasure Island*. Silver, Hands and their men are taken on as crew; Jonathan overhears Silver plotting a mutiny and the Squire's party abandons ship. They are picked up a Mexican, Mendoza, accompanied by Jonathan's aunt Helen. Mendoza has taken Silver's crew prisoner, but the pirates turn the tables. After they arrive at Treasure Island, Jonathan distracts Hands, who is guarding the ship, and his party escapes. They arrive at a stockade, where they engage in battle with Silver's men and Jonathan again encounters the white-suited man. The narrator of the story explains that he is in reality the white-suited man, and tells the rest of Jonathan's story in the third person.

Jonathan is captured by Silver's men, and Crabb explains that they are playing a game called *Treasure Island*, invented by Silver, who is really Professor Omar Amiralay, of the Department of Polemology at the University of Ghent. Helen and the Squire's party arrive and a shoot-out ensues. Crabb is killed by the wild man Ben Gunn; Silver laments the loss of Crabb, the best 'Jim Hawkins' ever to play his game, but is himself killed by Helen, and the game ends. As the survivors wait to leave the island, Jonathan tells Ben Gunn that one day he will play again, in the role of Silver. As Jonathan runs off down the beach, a gunshot is heard, and the white-suited man says that from then on, he himself was the only Jim Hawkins.

The *Treasure Island* myth is, of course, autonomous, far bigger than the book which it has outgrown through a whole tradition of films, pantomimes and Robert Newton impersonations. Raúl Ruiz's film could be seen as an elaborate commentary on the inescapably second-hand nature of the story, forever inscribed with endless repetitions, of which his own is simply the latest. *Treasure Island* is perhaps the most Pirandellian of his films, a blatant playing-out (in the ludic as well as the theatrical sense) in which all characters are aware of the prescribed nature of their actions – the viewer included.

In this version, Stevenson's *Treasure Island* (the Captain's bedside book) provides the key to a hidden treasure, but it is also the key to the narrative, in the sense that it provides a viewer's guide, a thread of coherence leading us through the film's imagistic labyrinth. It is even the treasure itself, the narrative core that seems to be buried within this semi-coherent parody of a narrative. The film is in fact a set of

nested repetitions of a narrative that is itself a repetition: the events in Jonathan's tale turn out to be a replay of a game based on a novel in which a group of detectives retrace an anterior story, that of the treasure's burial.

But the adventure also appears to be a series of dreams (Jonathan is constantly dozing off) of a boy working over the mysteries of the adult world, and rewriting them into a narrative based on a TV serial, itself a variation on *Treasure Island*. In addition, the film repeats a cinematic archetype – the genre of swashbuckling adventure, from Lang's *Moonfleet* (alluded to in Acacio de Almeida's atmospheric coastal photography) to the Disney *Treasure Island*, with the American-dubbed Jonathan as the paradigm of the trans-Atlantic 'plucky kid'. And there are echoes of another, buried, Platonic archetype – the four-hour epic that Ruiz originally contracted to make for Cannon Films, and which emerged after five years in this abridged and profoundly discontinuous version.

The most coherent model to set the story against is the Oedipal one. The voyeuristic child, literally dreaming up a narrative around what he sees, is engaged in a struggle to take control of events that happened before his birth, stories that happened before his story and which are repeated in his story. He undergoes an initiation, living through the adventure of Jim Hawkins, and displacing a series of hostile fathers, in order to become finally the master/narrator of his own story. But as always with Ruiz, the film's profusion of unassimilable elements leads to a desperate desire to fix a meaning of any sort, by way of compensation.

Treasure Island, it must be said, is too baggy and scrappy to hold undivided attention, lacking the concision of even a shaggy-dog yarn like *Three Crowns of the Sailor*, or the concentrated visual invention of *City of Pirates*. There is little continuity between the Ballantrae section and the treasure hunt itself, and characters come and go with no explanation – like the mysterious Helen, and Ben Gunn, kitted-up like a bit-player from *Apocalypse Now*. Even the most coherent interpretations of the film are disrupted by its self-consciously piecemeal nature. It is evident from the outset that there is to be no connection between the Disney-voiced Jonathan and the French narrator, whose barely decipherable gabble is immediately recognisable as that of Jean-Pierre Léaud.

Treasure Island is finally one of Ruiz's most seductive films because it so evidently falls short of the grandiose completeness to which it aspires. A richly messy narrative *bricolage*, it is finally revealed as a game that the viewer is invited to play. It may finally be about very little of serious substance – or indeed about something as trivial as the 'future of Western civilisation', to which the dying Captain portentously alludes – but that in itself makes it all the more worth playing.

Jonathan Romney

Johnny Suede

USA/Switzerland/France 1991

Director: Tom DiCillo

Certificate
15

Distributor
Artificial Eye

Production Companies
Balthazar
Pictures/Starr Pictures
(New York)
Vega Film (Zurich)/
Arena Films (Paris)

Executive Producers
Ruth Waldburger
Steven Starr

Producers
Yoram Mandel
Ruth Waldburger

Co-producers
Alain Klarer
Bruno Pesery
Janet Jacobson

Production Co-ordinator
Leslie Gaskins

Production Manager
Tisch Gomez

Unit Manager
Kira Smith

Location Manager
John Rath

Post-production Supervisor
Mark Frazier

Costing
Marcia Shulman

Extras:
Caroline Sinclair

Assistant Directors
Dolly Hall
Rob Hallenbake
Amy Schmidt

Screenplay
Tom DiCillo

Director of Photography
Joe DeSalvo

Colour
DuArt

Editor
Geraldine Peroni

Production Designer
Patricia Woodbridge

Art Director
Laura Brock

Visual Consultant
Stephanie Carroll

Special Design Consultant
Lizzie Gulczynski

Music
Jim Farmer
Additional:
Link Wray

Songs
"Teenage Idol"
performed by Ricky Nelson; "Travellin' Man" by Jerry Fuller, performed by Ricky Nelson; "Never Girl," "Mamma's Boy" by Steve Flynn, Tom DiCillo, performed by Brad Pitt, Steve Flynn; "Midtown" by Steve Flynn, Tom DiCillo, performed by Brad Pitt, Calvin Leeds, Steve Flynn, Christopher Faris, Steve Grandinetti; "Freak's Mamma's Boy" by Nick Cave, Tom DiCillo, performed by Nick Cave; "Hotel Loneliness," "Don't Leave Me," "Viva Zapata" by Link and Olive Wray; "Are You Hectic" by Christoph Dreher, Jochen Arbeit, Rainer Lingk, Thomas

Wydler, Blixa Bargeld, performed by Alert; "Oasis" Costumed Design Jessica Haston

Wardrobe Supervisor
Catherine Munro

Make-up Design
Jim Buff

Title Design
Milton Zelman

Titles/Opticals
Eastern Optical

EFX, Inc.

Sound Editors
Eliza Paley

Ira Spiegel

Sound Recordists
Neil Danziger
Dominick Tavella

Foley
Elisha Birnbaum

Production Assistants
Key:
Leo Santos
Set:
Jill Crook
Art:
Janine Michelle
Mark Frazier
Camera:
Axel Bauman
Office:
Tony Pierce
Unit:
Tony Ponti
David Buckingham

Cast
Brad Pitt
Johnny Suede
Richard Boes
Man in Tuxedo
Cheryl Costa
Woman in Alley
Michael Luciano
Mr Clepp
Calvin Leeds
Deke
Nick Cave
Freak Storm
Peter McRobbie
Flip Doubt
Ashley Gardner
Ellen
Dennis Parlato
Dalton
Ron Vawter
Winston
Tina Louise
Mrs Fontaine
Ralph Marrero
Bartender
Wilfredo Giovanni Clark
Slick
Alison Moir
Darlette
Michael Mulheren
Fred Business
Wayne Maugans
Ned Business
Catherine Keener
Yvonne
Joseph Barry
The Cowboy
John David Barone
Bernard
Tom Jarmusch
Conan
Samuel L. Jackson
B-Bop
Evelyn Solann
Old Woman
Ahmed Ben Larby
Cab Driver

8,712 feet
97 minutes



Weird on top: Brad Pitt, Catherine Keener

the help of the shoes, and the music of Ricky Nelson, he imagines himself as a pop idol and adopts the name Johnny Suede. Hard up for money, he pawns his guitar and meets his friend Deke, with whom he is forming a rock band. Later at the club, he falls in love with Darlette, who plays him off against her other, older lover, Flip Doubt, to whom she eventually returns.

Devastated, Johnny suffers anxious dreams. On the subway, he intervenes on a young woman's behalf when he catches a midget looking up her skirt. The woman, Yvonne, follows him to a band rehearsal; after the group are hired for a gig, they are let down by the departure of their bass player. Deke brings a gun and they discuss a robbery. Johnny visits Yvonne at her flat and they begin an affair during which she teaches him about sex. He subsequently fails to contact her; they quarrel when she finds out that he is interested in other women.

Johnny meets the enigmatic con man, 'pop star' Freak Storm, who takes twenty dollars from him and gives him a song. Johnny becomes ill and dreams that Darlette and Flip look after him. Realising that he likes Yvonne more than he thought, he moves in with her. Unhappy with the compromise it represents for his life style, he falls out with Deke, nearly shoots the gallery owner he is working for as a decorator, and picks up a strange woman. Yvonne finds out and they quarrel violently. After a miserable night spent wandering the city, during which he meets Freak, who is now with Darlette, Johnny returns to ask Yvonne's forgiveness. A car drives away with a suede shoe on its roof.

The baroque teddy-boy quiff has become some sort of motif for the 'new wave' directors: Kaurismäki, Jarmusch, Lynch and now first-time director Tom DiCillo parade these grotesqueries as emblems of a post-modern innocence, a studied nostalgia to cloak the realities of late capitalism, global disaster (or whatever ailments come to mind). Probably its best manifestation was in Alan Rudolph's *Trouble in Mind*, which transformed Keith Car-

radine's small-time crook with the most wonderful rococo quiff.

But by and large, quiff movies demand little in the way of characterisation and *Johnny Suede* is no exception (it began as a theatrical one-hander, written by DiCillo and produced by the Home for Contemporary Theatre in New York). A weak script tries to disguise its creakiness and triviality (good woman straightens out bad boy) with tired surrealist tricks. (*Un chien andalou* rears its head once again when Johnny discovers a severed mannequin's hand in the road.) *Johnny Suede*, in fact, sends the bored spectator chasing after the titles of too many films which it mimics, not surprisingly since DiCillo worked as cinematographer for many underground-type film-makers (on Bette Gordon's *Variety*, Jim Jarmusch's *Stranger than Paradise*, and Eric Mitchell's *Underground USA*).

Most interestingly, perhaps, *Twin Peaks* and *Wild at Heart* come to mind, though the lesson to be learned from this is that soap operas - even of the Lynchian variety - are terrible models for features (characterisation and plotting are developed to quite different rules). Johnny's only saving grace is a kindly innocence, and we lose interest in him early on as this innocence doesn't hide anything more gripping. By and large, the post-modernist text as baroque nostalgia is incapable of dealing with the good and the bad in a genuinely moral sense, and *Johnny Suede* reveals the inadequacies of such an approach when not in the hands of a profound ironist like Kaurismäki.

Brad Pitt - 'discovered' in *Thelma & Louise* - struggles boyfully with the role in Brandoesque fashion: preening, pouting and regularly shedding his shirt. But the central problem of *Johnny Suede* is that the puerile ambitions of its superficial hero seem to be simply the result of adolescent fantasising. Johnny's persona makes it hardly plausible that the sensible Yvonne would have established a relationship with him in the first place. All in all, *Johnny* is the stylish centre of a tiresomely style-conscious film.

Michael O'Pray

Love Crimes

USA 1991

Director: Lizzie Borden

Certificate
18

Distributor
Rank

Production Company
Sovereign Pictures
In association with
Miramax Films

Executive Producer
Forrest Murray

Production Executive
Deborah Wolsh

Producers
Lizzie Borden
Rudy Langlais

Production Co-ordinator
Navette Guidebeck

Unit Manager
Joe Dishner

Unit Production Managers
Atlanta:
Victoria Westhead
Dallas:
Mike Dempsy
Location Manager
Gina Casino
Post-production Supervisor
Hilary Roope
Costing
Pat Golden
John McCabe
Dallas:
Carla Posey
Extras Atlanta:
Joanne Smith
Kim Holt
Extras Savannah:
Cynthia F. Stilwell
Promotions
Larry Stansfield
Assistant Directors
Atlanta:
Lisa Zimble
Cass Donovan
Robert Ballantine
Dallas:
Mike Dempsy
A. Catherine King
Hunter Carson
Screenplay
Allan Moyle
Laurie Frank
Story
Allan Moyle
Director of Photography
Jack N. Green
Colour
DeLuxe
Additional Photography
Atlanta:
Ben Butin
Dallas:
Phedon Papamichael
Video Artist
Chris Caddel
Editors
Nicholas C. Smith
Mike Jackson
Additional:
Christy Richmond
Production Designer
Armin Ganz
Art Directors
Atlanta:
Tom Davick
Dallas:
John E. "Jack" Marty
Art Department Co-ordinator
Lisa Lawes
Set Director
Dallas:
Rodney L. Leach
Set Decorator
Joseph Litsch
Set Dressers
Bob Baker
Grant Scharbo
David Hanover's Photographs
B/W:
Ruth Leitman
Colour:
Patrick Bergin
Special Effects
Co-ordinator
Margret Johnson

Special Effects
Bob Shelley

Music
Graeme Revell
Additional:
Roger Mason
Music Editor
Will Kaplan
Songs
"Yodelling in the Valley" by and performed by Patrick Bergin; "Simple Gifts" performed by Sean Young, Danielle Shuman
Costume Design
Irene Albright
Iris Lewis
Wardrobe Supervisors
Atlanta:
David S. Jansen
Keith G. Lewis
Dallas:
Carin Berger
Make-up Artists
Atlanta:
Harriette Landau
Dallas:
Leo L. Lotito Jr
Sound Editors
Tom Betz
Anton Holden
Dialogue:
Lloyd Jay Keiser
Michael Haight
Al Decker
Sound Recordists
Atlanta:
Brit Warner
Dallas:
Michael Haines
Foley/ADR Recordist
Jon Taylor
Ultra stereo
ADR Group Co-ordinator
Alison Caine
Sound Re-recordists
Paul Schremp
Mark Linden
Jon Taylor
Jim Bell
Kevin Mitchell
Foley Artists
Mike Salvetta
Mary Rodgers
Production Assistants
Atlanta:
Leigh Leverett
Quinn Yancey
Doug Lloyd
Greg Gordon
Jason Keller
Dallas:
Doug Lloyd
Greg Gordon
Jason Keller
Office Atlanta:
St Christopher Parr
Office Savannah:
J. Walt Waters
Set:
Karen Davis
Stunt Co-ordinator
Lonni R. Smith Jr
Stunt Doubles
Patrick Bergin
Anderson Martin
Randy More
Sean Young
Randi Layne
Mimi Cochran
Cast
Sean Young
Dana Greenway
Patrick Bergin
David Hanover
Arnetia Walker
Marie Johnson
James Read
Stanton Gray
Ron Orbach
Detective Eugene Tully
Fern Dorsey
Colleen Dells
Tina Hightower
Anne Winslow

In a dance club, Johnny Suede combs his baroque quiff in the toilet mirror. Later, while he is telephoning the police to report a rape, a box containing a pair of suede shoes lands on top of the phone box. With

Donna Biscoe
Hannah
Danielle Shuman
Dana age 6
David Shuman
Lou Jay Greenway
Rebecca Wackler
Cecilia
Jill Jane Clementis
Lizbeth
Roe Sabordo
Tamika
Sarah Bork
Clarice Greenway
Dianne Butler
Kelly Andrews
Kathleen Rodgers
Zenita
Linda D. Thompson
Susan
Dana L. Backwell
Margie
Scott Kerr
Mikey
Gary Bullock
Joey
Yolanda Asher
Kim
Peter Stanilias
Patrick
Jim Harley
Chief Ellis
Bob Banks
Jamie
Johnson Taylor
Wilmer
Adrian Roberts
Officer Riggs

Bob Hannah
Detective Taylor
Hurley Daughtery
Tom Rowan
Dennis Norton
Police Officers
Sonny Shroyer
Jimmy Meyers
L. Warren Young
Carl Bates
Charles Cheek
Plainclothes Cops
Joani Yarbrough
Waitress
Jody G. DuFresne
Receptionist
Taylor Vickers
Hooker
John Hambrick
Man in Trailer
Scott Leftridge
Jonjo Mayo
Bar Fight Men
Lonnie R. Smith Jr
Man in Hotel
James Mayberry
Dennis
Leah Morgan
Woman
Wayne Shorter
Ronnie Free
Joe Jones
Ben Tucker
Jazz Quartet

8,140 feet
90 minutes

Dana Greenway, an ambitious assistant DA based in Atlanta, accompanies her team on a night-time vice raid. During the action, the life of her colleague and best friend, Lieutenant Marie Johnson, who is working undercover, is seriously endangered because Dana holds back until she has recorded enough evidence. Dana's next case involves a man who is masquerading as a celebrated photographer by the name of David Hanover in order to lure women into posing for him and then having sex. Several of his victims have come forward to press charges, but while they accuse him of theft and deception, they hesitate to charge him with rape.

Dana becomes deeply involved in the inquiry, believing that it presents challenging legal implications. The police department in nearby Savannah reports an incident in which a woman has been brutally beaten and links are made with 'Hanover'. Dana goes to Savannah where Detective Tully is assigned to work on the case with her. She decides to set herself up as the kind of woman Hanover seems to be after, and poses as an out-of-town teacher on vacation. She waits at a photo-developing store where Hanover is expected. He invites her out for dinner, and suggests that he take some photos of her. Back in her hotel room, while she is in the bathroom wiring herself up to a tape recorder, Hanover begins to suspect her and takes flight.

Dana follows him to his log cabin some way out of town, where she is discovered, disarmed and locked in a cupboard. This recalls unsettling childhood memories in which Dana's father also locked her in a cupboard while he had sex with various mistresses. Meanwhile, in Atlanta, Dana's boss (and former lover) is becoming concerned and sends Maria after her. Dana and Hanover become locked in an intense power game. She escapes from the cup-

board and decides to have a bath while he is out. He comes back and photographs her while she is asleep in the bath. She wakes up and fantasises about the two making love. She then recovers her gun and attempts to take him in to the sheriff's office. He, however, manages to escape in his car. Meanwhile, Maria, who has been following Dana's trail, arrives at the cabin and finds the polaroid of Dana as well as some of her torn clothes. She suspects the worse and is surprised to see Dana later at the hotel.

After seeing a newspaper report of the event, Hanover contacts Dana and they arrange to meet. This time she allows herself to be a plant, but Hanover gets away before the police apprehend him. Dana is taken off the case. Later Maria tells her that Hanover has been caught, but then urgently rings Dana to tell her that the police have got the wrong man. Hanover turns up in Dana's flat, but in the ensuing struggle she manages to knock him to the ground and, apparently, kill him. This triggers memories of a similar struggle in which her father shot her mother.

Love Crimes has had a vexed production history and the scars show despite a desperate attempt to patch the film up. Lizzie Borden has said that the trouble began during shooting when it became apparent that the two financiers had two different films in mind: one a thriller, the other a Zalman King-style soft-porn piece. It is difficult to calculate from the final film exactly what Borden initially had in mind for the project, which is the first she has directed but not written (*Times Square* and *Pump Up the Volume* writer/director Allan Moyle co-authored the original screenplay).

There is some evidence that it could have been an intriguing and complex exploration of female sexuality and desires in relation to the cultural forces which patrol them, as well as airing the contentious issue of date rape. Such themes would have benefited from the kind of keen and cool observation that Borden displayed

in *Working Girls*; indeed Sean Young's understated performance hints at such a detached style. But it is unclear whether the film intends to examine or merely reproduce its gallery of archetypes. Hanover is the man with the camera, who uses it to win control over women who wish to indulge their masochistic fantasies. "Why would you let him put you in that position?" asks Dana, as she questions one of his victims. "Have you never had a secret fantasy?" is the reply.

Interestingly, all Hanover's victims are stereotypically feminine, with their homes fussily decorated and their clothes daintily styled. They are women who buy into a particular notion of womanhood - they are flattered and charmed by the mock photographer's attentions and promises of a model career. Conversely, Dana starts out as the archetypal masculinised woman - the soberly dressed careerist with her hair slicked back. She is a voyeur of sorts who lives in a scarcely decorated apartment and who, at the beginning of the film, holds back during a vice raid so that she can just watch. Indeed Dana's initial fascination with the Hanover case is provoked as much by intrigue as a sense of justice. She is willing to play cat and mouse on his terms.

Consequently, her journey into the metaphorical and literal woods in search of Hanover involves a masquerade as she makes herself up and curls her hair. As the out-of-town teacher, she has become his ideal prey. But as their protracted game starts, it is unclear what Dana is meant to achieve personally other than the most trite sort of sexual liberation. The closet flashbacks to her childhood (apparently tagged on at the producers' insistence) imply that it is Dana rather than Hanover who is psychologically damaged, and the film has been made more incoherent by the removal of some of the potentially confrontational scenes between Dana and Hanover in the cabin. Borden no doubt meant *Love Crimes* to be a bold statement, but it ends up being no more than criminally banal.

Lizzie Francke



Fantasies, his & hers: Patrick Bergin, Sean Young

Marquis

Belgium/France 1989

Director: Henri Xhonneux

Certificate

18

Distributor

ICA Projects

Production Companies

Y.C. Alligator Film
(Brussels)/Constellation/
Tchin Tchin (Paris)
With assistance from
the Ministry of the
French Community in
Belgium, the National
Film Board of France

Executive Producer

Eric Van Beuren

Associate Producers

Claudie Ossard

Roger Cornu

Production Co-ordinator

Didier Schretter

Production Manager

Eric Plateau

Voice Casting

Monique Roblot

Assistant Directors

Joseph Claes

Jacques de Crop

Screenplay

Roland Topor

Henri Xhonneux

Director of Photography

Etienne Fauduet

In colour

Camera Operators

Jacques Fréjabe

Koen Firlefin

Animation

Luc Noël

Michel Mirkovic

Marion Duval

Viviane Lys

Editor

Chantal Hymans

Art Director

Roland Topor

Set Design

Pierre-François

Limbosch

Special Effects

Léon Dutz

Creatures

Designed by:

Roland Topor

Created by:

Jacques Gastineau

Frédérique Gastineau

Models

Christian Bogaerts

Puppeteers

Monique Zimmerman

Thierry De Smedt

Philippe Delhasse

Josette Gastineau

Gilles Rossire

Emmanuel Pitois

Olivier Noiville

Music

Reinhardt Wagner

Music Producer

Bruno Creange

Songs

"Marquis" performed

by Agnès Mellon;

Dominique Visse;

"Beau Citoyen"

performed by

Brigitte Faure

Costume Design

Maryvonne Herzog

Wardrobe

Ilona Van Besien

Sound Editors

Joel Ranganon

Dominique Hennequin

Sound Recorderist

Marie-Jeanne

Wyckmans

Sound Re-recordist

Chantal Tesche

Production Assistant

Caroline Selle

Stunts

Thierry Hallard

Cast

Philippe Bizot

Marquis

Willem von Mandarine

Bien de Moor

Justine

Juliette de Titane

Gabrielle Van Damme

Ambert

Bernardin

Olivier Dechaveau

Dom Pompero

Lupino

Bernard Cogneaux

Gaëtan de Préaubois

Duc d'Orléans

Pierre Decuyper

Pigonou

Jaco

Voices

François Marthouret

Marquis

Valérie Kilig

Colin

Michel Robin

Ambert

Isabel Canet-Wolfe

Justine

Vicky Messica

Dom Pompero

Nathalie Juvet

Juliette

René Lebrun

Gaëtan de Préaubois

Bernardin

Bob Morel

Pigonou

Roger Crouzet

Lupino

Willem Holtrop

Willem

Eric De Saria

Jaco

Henri Rubinstein

Orléans

Peter Fischer

Hans Maull

Jacques Bouanich

Jean-Daniel Boucry

Chickens

Philippe Dumond

Serge Blumental

Clients

7,451 feet

83 minutes

Subtitles

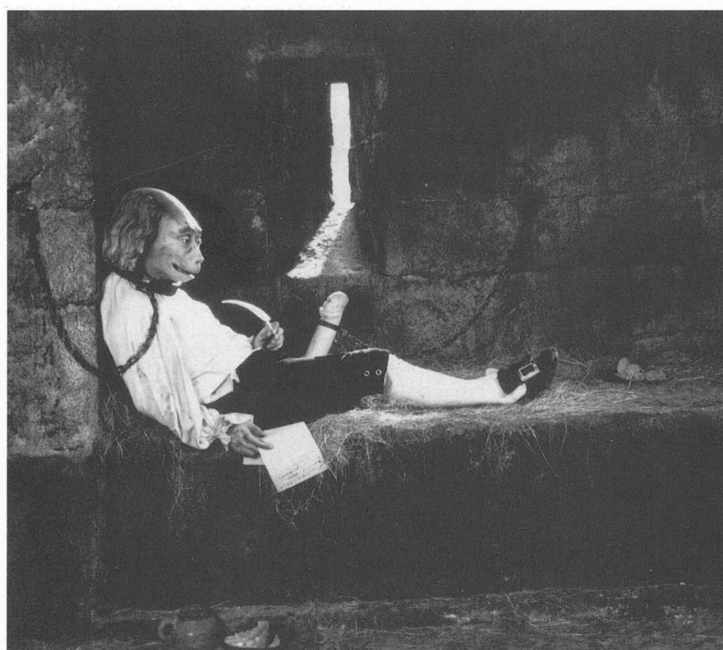
1789. Marquis, an aristocratic dog imprisoned in the Bastille, spends his time writing pornography and conversing with his penis, Colin, while rejecting the sexual advances of his jailor Ambert, a rat. In the next cell is the wolf Lupino, the former police chief responsible for Marquis' imprisonment; he and the pig Pigonou, an informer and former pork trafficker, are attempting to escape with a rope ladder of crucifixes. Another prisoner, Justine (a cow), tells the priest Dom Pompero, a camel, that she was raped by the King and is now pregnant. ►

◀ Marquis is visited by the prison governor Gaétan de Préaubois (a cockerel), who quizzes him about an alleged act of blasphemy. Dom Pompero tells Préaubois that Justine is expecting a royal bastard and, to avoid a scandal, they plan to frame Marquis with rape. Briefly put into Marquis' cell, Lupino explains that he was imprisoned for his involvement with the revolutionary Citizens' Club of the Rive Gauche, and begs Marquis to provide a distraction to help him escape, by giving into Ambert's lust. Colin, with whom the decision rests, initially refuses, then agrees if Marquis will let him make love to a crack in the wall.

Dom Pompero brings Justine to Marquis' cell, but Colin is wounded by his exertions with the wall, and is only revived by the tender ministrations of Justine. She is tortured by the jealous Ambert, and the news spread that Marquis has raped her. At a Christmas dinner held by Préaubois, his dominatrix mistress Juliette de Titane, a mare, sends Lupino a handkerchief, indicating an escape plan. She and her parrot accomplice, Jaco the Fatalist, try to spring Lupino but fail, although Marquis diverts attention by bugging Ambert with a lobster. At a meeting of the Citizens' Club, Juliette, Jaco, and their co-conspirators the Duc d'Orléans and Bernardin plan to take the Bastille. Justine tells Dom Pompero about Marquis' writing. Reading the papers at an orgy, Dom Pompero impresses Dutch journalist Willem von Mandarine (a fish) who, thinking the camel is the author, proposes to publish them.

Dom Pompero chooses a pseudonym, "SADE" ('Sinful Addressee Died Estranged'), and releases Marquis from solitary confinement to write more works, which are soon a *succès de scandale*. Juliette gives birth to a baby in an iron mask, and Ambert, thinking the child is his, smuggles it to England. Luring the masochistic Préaubois into his own torture room, Juliette frees Marquis, Lupino and Pignonou from their dungeon, although the latter two are killed during their escape, as is Préaubois. Fleeing by coach, Marquis and Juliette make love. As news comes that the Bastille is taken, Marquis finds that Juliette has hanged herself. However, Colin's kiss revives her, and the penis finally leaves his master to accompany Juliette on her travels.

French cartoonist and satirist Roland Topor is no stranger to cinema (he played the lunatic Renfield in Herzog's *Nosferatu*) and certainly no stranger to teasing outrage – a recent poster of his featured a baby crucified on a door, with the cartoonist peering round and announcing, "It's not a real baby". Compared with some of his visions, *Marquis* is tame stuff, but it declares its subversive intentions from the start, by dedicating itself to an unlikely pairing of names – the Marquis de Sade and the naturalist Buffon. The Enlightenment notions of documenting animal behaviour and the human passions are conflated in a



Master and member: Philippe Bizot

comic fantasy that casts Sade's sojourn in the Bastille as *Animal Farm* burlesque. But in fact, the overall effect, grotesque as it is, at times verges on the insipidity of the French television series *Bébête Show*, which lampoons politicians as (all too cuddly) animals.

Marquis is effective not so much because it animalises its characters – a trick which yields a rich seam of gratuitous punning and such predictable ribaldry as Préaubois crowing at the point of orgasm. Rather, it works best when its anthropomorphism-in-reverse remains genuinely indeterminate. Topor's masks are not quite animal, nor quite human, and of variable expressiveness. The rooster's lascivious jubilation, the repellent Ambert with his tail displaced into his coiffure, and the sentimental eroticism of Justine's snout are both comic and unsettling, because they confound easy identification as Muppet-style 'critters'; whereas the teddybear-like Orléans is featureless enough to be a second-string Sooty player.

Where the grotesquerie collapses – and this is clearly part of the film's strategy – is in the blandness of Marquis himself, presented as a dewy-eyed spaniel with an accordingly honeyed voice. Marquis is the innocent in the drama, in much the same way that the featureless Justine in his writings is simply the focal point for a panorama of brutality. The fiercely autonomous Colin – who plays his valet and enjoys much the same relation to him as Diderot's Jacques le Fataliste does to his master – is a perkily innocent embodiment of priapism, and the two characters represent, in the most solid way imaginable, the split between the mind and the passions. Their philosophical dialogues provide the most engaging parts of the script, as when Colin, to prove that Marquis' imagination is nothing without his promptings, transforms a dangling spider into a set of writhing stockinged legs.

But Colin also acts as the agent for something of a whitewash of Sade.

Even though the film's hero is not the Marquis de Sade himself (if we take that name to be the historical figure as well as the mythical construct of the writings) but a dog named Marquis, nevertheless Sade emerges canonised from the treatment. Colin reproaches him, "I know you prefer words to deeds", but this was certainly not true of the real Sade. Marquis prefers thinking about sex to performing it, and views the real thing as an unwelcome distraction from erotic reverie. He is obsessive about writing, to the point of using the blood of his palms as ink, thereby acquiring appropriately Christ-like stigmata.

But the film is less interested in the question of this graphomania as an erotic performance in itself – which remains the most fascinating aspect of Sade's story – than in portraying Marquis as a martyr punished for dreaming and for performing symbolic acts like defiling the crucifix. By presenting this paradigm of innocent libido in an age of orgiastic venality and hypocrisy, the film does little more than rehearse – with misogynistic and homophobic trimmings – Surrealist arguments about the "Divine Marquis" as a secular saint.

What it fails to do is prise any new meanings out of the core of Sadean fantasy. Marquis' dreams come across as listless ribaldry, full of blood and flailing legs, while Ambert's milking of Justine is a queasy sight indeed, as her blood drips into the milk bucket. Justine, however, is the vehicle for the film's best joke, and the one that suggests a close reading of Sade. When Marquis reads his cruel fantasies to her, she sees them as a touching, sentimental portrayal of the woes of the innocent. This, of course, is precisely how the novels present themselves, albeit in a deeply ironic manner. But one suspects that is how Topor and director Henri Khonneux would like us to read the works, if not the life, of Sade himself.

Jonathan Romney

My Cousin Vinny

USA 1992

Director: Jonathan Lynn

Certificate
15

Distributor
20th Century Fox
Production Company
20th Century Fox
In association with
Peter V. Miller
Investment Corp.
Producers
Dale Launer
Paul Schiff

Production Co-ordinator
Julie Hartley
Unit Production Manager
Mary McLaglen
Location Manager
Scott Elias
Post-production Supervisor
Leslie Leitner

Casting
David Rubin
Associate:
Debra Zane
Local:
Shay Griffin
Extras:
Len Hunt
Voice:
Barbara Harris
Assistant Directors
Frank Capra III
Jeffrey Wetzel
Screenplay
Dale Launer
Director of Photography
Peter Deming

Colour
DeLuxe
Additional Camera Operator
Scott Browner
Editors
Tony Lombardo
Additional:
Stephen E. Rivkin
Production Designer
Victoria Paul

Art Directors
Randall Schmoock
Michael Rizzo
Art Department Co-ordinator
Wendy Smith
Set Decorator
Michael Seirton
On-set Dresser
Karen Young
Draughtswoman
Julie Sanford
Special Effects
Dick Cross
Michael Day

Music
Randy Edelman
Supervising Music Editor
Kathy Durning
Music Editor
Scott Stambler
Music Consultant
Joel Sill

Songs
"Way Down South"
by Edgar Winter,
performed by
The Fabulous
Thunderbirds; "Don't
Look at My Shadow"
by Steven Stills; "Funny
How Time Slips Away"
by Willie Nelson,
performed by Jess
Harnell; "It Just Takes
One" by Jan
Buckingham, David
Vidal, performed by
Prentiss Goodwin;
"Secretly", "Are You
Really Mine" by Dick
Manning, Al Hoffman,
Mark Markwell,
performed by Jimmie
Rodgers; "Mind Your
Own Business" by
David Cole, Robert
Clivilles, performed by
Clivilles & Cole; "Stand

by Your Man" by Billy
Sherrill, Tammy
Wynette, performed
by Gail Lopata Lennon;
"A Second Hand Love"
by Phil Spector, Hank
Hunter, performed by
Connie Francis; "Keep
It to Yourself" by Alan
Mirikitani, performed
by BB Chung King &
the Screaming Buddah
Heads; "Bible Belt"
performed by
Travis Tritt
Costume Design
Carol Wood
Key Costumer
Daryl A. Kerrigan
Make-up
Key:

Carmen Willis
Joe Pesci:
James Sarzotti
Title Design
Saxon/Ross Film
Design, Inc
Titles/Opticals
Pacific Title

Supervising Sound Editor
Michael Hilkene

Sound Editors
Gaston Biraben
Robert Fitzgerald
Jeremy J. Gordon
Eric W. Lindemann
Raoul
Mark Rathaus
Sound Recordists
Robert Anderson Jrn

Jack Keller
David Behle
Music:
Elton Ahi
Dolby stereo
Consultant:
Douglas Greenfield

Sound Re-recordists
Robert J. Litt
Greg P. Russell
Elliot Tyson
Frank Mantano

Sound Effects
Co-ordinator:
Odin Benitez
Additional Recordist:
Ken J. Johnson
Foley Walkers
Gregg Barbanell
Sarah Monat

Legal Technical Adviser
Doug Knoll

Magic Consultant
James Brandon

Production Assistants
Jon Fitzgerald
Patrick McDill
Post-production:
Sharma Bennett
Set:
David Silva
Sarah Shields
Tina Elfstrand
Stunt Co-ordinator
Roy Farfel
Animal Wrangler
Bryan Hudson
The Animal Agency

Cast
Joe Pesci
Vinny Gambini
Ralph Macchio
Bill Gambini
Marisa Tomei
Mona Lisa Vito
Mitchell Whitfield
Stan Rothenstein
Fred Gwynne
Judge Chamberlain
Haller
Lane Smith
Jim Trotter III
Austin Pendleton
John Gibbons
Bruce McGill
Sheriff Farley

Maury Chaykin
Sam Tipton
Pauline Meyers
Constance Riley
Raynor Scheine
Ernie Crane
James Rebhorn
George Wilbur
Chris Ellis
J.T.
Michael Simpson
Neckbrace
Lou Walker
Grits Cook
Kenny Jones
Jimmy Willis
Thomas Merdis
Man in Town Square
J. Don Ferguson
Michael Genevie
Guards

Jeff Lewis
Ron Leggett
Aubrey J. Osteen
Deputies
Larry Shuler
Hotel Clerk
Suzi Bass
Woman
Michael Burgess
Prison Van Driver
Bill Coates
Bailiff
Jill Jane Clements
Courtroom Clerk
Muriel Moore
Bob Penny
Jurors

10,724 feet
119 minutes

Two college friends, Bill Gambini and Stan Rothenstein, are driving from New York to UCLA via the Southern states. At a roadside store in Alabama, they inadvertently leave with a can of tuna for which they haven't paid. Stopped by the police, they readily confess their guilt, only to learn that they are being held for the killing of the store clerk. In panic, Bill summons the first lawyer he can think of, his cousin Vinny.

When Vinny arrives with his girlfriend, Mona Lisa Vito, it turns out he has just passed his bar exams (at the sixth attempt), and this will be his first case. In court, his ignorance of the law is soon evident, and his casual New York style alienates the judge, Chamberlain Haller, who jails him for contempt of court. Bailed out by Lisa, Vinny tries to construct a defence case, to the amusement of the DA, the urbane James Trotter III.

Frustrated in his attempts to get a good night's sleep, and at loggerheads with the judge, Vinny puts up an increasingly inept show in court, and Stan entrusts his case to the local defence lawyer, Gibbons. A string of prosecution witnesses swear they saw Bill and Stan making a fast getaway in their distinctive '54 Buick. But Vinny, his innate argumentative skills honed by frequent verbal duels with Lisa, succeeds in demolishing the testimonies. Stan switches his defence back to Vinny.

Trotter calls a surprise expert witness, who testifies that the getaway car's skidmarks match the tyres on Bill and Stan's Buick. To counter him,

Vinny puts Lisa on the stand. Raised in a family of car mechanics, she proves with impressive expertise that the tracks could only have been made by a '53 Pontiac. Two young men, armed and driving a Pontiac, are reported arrested in Georgia. Bill and Stan are set free, and Vinny and Lisa drive off arguing about their wedding plans.

A beat-up Buick convertible with New York plates cruises across the Alabama state line. Inside it, two clean-cut college boys smirk at road signs announcing "Dirt for Sale" and "Free Horse Manure". A disastrous culture clash is clearly waiting to happen, and it's not long in arriving. "They're all clans here", blurts Stan, one of the New Yorkers, "they're in-bred, they sleep with their sisters! Well, some of them do", he adds, meeting the glare of the local sheriff.

At its laziest, this leads to some duff comic ideas – the defence attorney with a speech impediment is straight out of the stock cupboard – but the humour is for the most part a lot sharper than might have been expected, given Jonathan Lynn's track record as a director (*Nuns on the Run* and the witless *Cluedo*-spoof *Clue*). For this, Dale Launer's script deserves much of the credit. In a film whose theme is verbal dexterity, with a hero as prone to talking himself into trouble as out of it, slick, hyper-charged dialogue is vital, and Launer provides some virtuoso passages – Vinny bemusing a pool-hall bully with legal jargon, or Lisa's literally motormouth testimony about the tyre tracks.

The key scene, though, is a seemingly inconsequential spat between Vinny and Lisa over a dripping tap in their motel, both of them deploying increasingly recondite arguments in what, it becomes evident, is not just Vinny's pre-courtroom workout but their preferred style of sexual foreplay. Joe Pesci's comic variations on his *tour de force* in *GoodFellas* are well matched by Fred Gwynne's courtly Southern bile as Judge Haller. Their acrimonious exchanges provide some focus for a comedy that otherwise risks spiralling off into a succession of diverting but not always fully integrated set-pieces.

Philip Kemp



Mean mouth: Joe Pesci

Paradise

USA 1991

Director: Mary Agnes Donoghue

Certificate
(Not yet issued)
Distributor
Warner Bros
Production Company
Touchstone Pictures
Executive Producers
Jean François Lepetit
Ted Field
Robert W. Cort
Producers
Scott Kroopf
Patrick Palmer
Production Co-ordinator
Kathy Sarreal
Unit Production Manager
Tikki Goldberg
Location Managers
Steve Rhea
Charles Miller
Nathan Paul Gendzier
2nd Unit Director
Patrick Palmer
CASTING
Johanna Ray
Locations:
Joe Alfieri
Assistant Directors
Fredric B. Blankfein
Paul Fonteyn
David Katz
Screenplay
Mary Agnes Donoghue
Based on the film
Le Grand Chemin by
Jean-Loup Hubert
Director of Photography
Jerzy Zielinski
Colour
Technicolor
Wildlife Photography
Peter Pilafian
Camera Operator
Martin Hume
Editors
Eva Gardos
Debra McDermott
Production Designers
Evelyn Sakash
Marcia Hinds
Set Decorator
Donna J. Hattin
Scenic Artist
J. Haven Storey
Storyboard Artist
Robert F. Gale
Catherine Reston Lee's
Paintings
Margaret Hoybach
Special Effects
Co-ordinator
A.J. Bosnengo
Frank Fleming
Music
David Newman
Music Extract
"Queen of the Night"
from *The Magic Flute*
by Wolfgang Amadeus
Mozart, performed
by Berlin Radio
Symphony Orchestra
Orchestrations
David Newman
Supervising Music Editor
Tom Villano
Songs
"OK Mood Swing"
by Prince Poetry,
Pharohe Monch,
performed by
Organized Konfusion;
"Paradise" by Scott
Cutler, Brian
O'Doherty, performed
by Brian O'Doherty;
"Don't Need Love"
by Johnny Diesel,
performed by Johnny
Diesel and the
Injectors; "I Walked to
the Party" by Michael
J. Henderson, R.S. Field,
performed by Michael
Henderson; "Alice
Blue Gown" by Harry
Tierney, Joseph
McCarthy; "Totally

Alone" by and
performed by
Billy Childs
Costume Design
Linda Palermo
Donahue
Costume Supervisor
Fred Lloyd
Costumers
Kelly Mitchell
Don Johnson;
Gregory B. Peña
Women:
Peggy Stamper
Make-up Artists
Key:
Peggy Teague
Don Johnson;
Jay Cannistraci
Melanie Griffith;
Kathy Foley
Title Design
Neal Thompson
Titles/Opticals
Cinema Research
Corporation
Supervising Sound Editors
Richard E. Yawn
Gordon Ecker
Sound Editors
Hector Gilka
Kim Secrist
Bruce Fortune
Don Warner
Glenn Hoskinson
John Kwiatkowski
Anthony Milch
Rocky Moriana Jr
Supervising ADR Editor
Becky Sullivan
Supervising Foley Editor
Scott D. Jackson
Foley Editors
Shawn Sykora
Steven J. Schwalbe
Sound Recordsists
Richard Lightstone
J. Allen Hurd
Music: Tim Boyle
Foley Recordist
Gary Hecker
Dolby stereo
Sound Re-recordists
John Reitz
David Campbell
Gregg Rudloff
Sound Effects
Gary Bluffer
Foley Walkers
Jeff Wilhoit
Katie Rowe
ADR Voices
Shawn Donahue
Stephani Ryan
Judi Durand
Barbara Iley
Megan Parlan
Jamie Gunderson
Doris Hess
David McCharen
Greg Finley
David Randolph
Vernon Scott
Arlin Miller
Joel Carlson
Chris Allport
Production Assistants
Lisa M. Soete
Cheri Brown
Michael Scott Reid
Heidi Gottlieb
Stunt Co-ordinator
Max Kleven
Stunts
Larry Nicholas
Elyse Garfinkel
Lee Poppie
Merritt Yohnka
Cast
Melanie Griffith
Lily Reed
Don Johnson
Ben Reed
Elijah Wood
Willard Young
Thora Birch
Billie Pike

Sheila McCarthy
Sally Pike
Eve Gordon
Rosemary Young
Louise Latham
Catherine Reston Lee
Greg Davis
Earl McCoy
Sarah Trigger
Darlene
Richard K. Olsen
Minister
Rick Andosca
Ernest Parkett
Anthony Romano
Clay, Popular Boy
Timothy Erskine
Darlene's Boyfriend
Chestley Price
Bus Driver
Dave Hager
Bartender

John R. Copeman
Fisherman
Jeff Jeffcoat
Eddie
Scott Hubacek
Greyhound Bus Driver
Melanie van Betten
Marliss
Jason Robert Somrak
Neighbourhood Tough
William Thomas Crumby
Lou
Carl McIntyre
Willard's Father
Lucy Alpaugh
Kay Shroka
Old Ladies
Eric Vest
DJ
9,990 feet
111 minutes

Ten-year-old Willard Young has a scholarship to a private school in Manhattan. He gets beaten up by the kids in his neighbourhood when they see his uniform, and his wealthy schoolmates are equally unfriendly. His mother Rosemary, who is pregnant and whose husband has left her for another woman, is preoccupied with her own misfortunes. She takes Willard to the small rural town of Paradise, where she leaves him for the summer with her oldest friend Lily Reed and her husband Ben. But Ben and Lily too seem distant and hostile to Willard. He finds a soul-mate in Billie, a tomboy who also has family problems. Gradually, Willard discovers that Lily and Ben are grieving over the accidental death of their son. Eventually, his presence starts to bring them some relief from their pain. However, when Willard learns that his father has left home for good, he goes missing. A search is mounted and Lily and Ben begin to realise how much they care about Willard. After two days and nights, the noise of the remote control airplane given to the boy by Ben leads the search party to a watch tower from which Willard is threatening to jump. He is coaxed down, and in their joy and relief Lily and Ben rediscover their love for each other.

Paradise (a remake of Jean-Loup Hubert's 1987 *Le Grand Chemin*) has been publicised as a film about overcoming loss, in particular, coming to terms with the death of a child. In fact, it registers as a simple moral tale about how children can enrich the lives of adults by bringing them back to what is important. It also conjures up that strand in US literature (Tom Sawyer, Huckleberry Finn) which celebrates a pastoral fantasy. Willard leaves the hostile city for the country, where the traditional delights of American childhood – fishing, exploring and wandering about unsupervised – are still possible. As the adults trying to work through their grief, Melanie Griffith and Don Johnson are obviously intended to provide the film's sexual dynamics as well as its emotional core. But their feelings about their son's death are reduced to brief moments of rage and rituals of remembrance, and their suffering is never credible.

Angela McRobbie

La Petite Bande (The Little Gang)

France 1983

Director: Michel Deville

Certificate

U

Distributor

Squirrel Films

Production Companies

Gaumont-Stand'Art/FR3
Elefilm

In association with

Hamster Productions

Executive Producer

UK:

Bob Kellett

Producer

Denis Mermet

Production Co-ordinators

Philippe Lievre

Yvette Prayer

Production Managers

Franz Damamme

Roger Fleytoux

Assistant Director

Rosalinde Damamme

Screenplay

Gilles Perrault

Michel Deville

Story

Gilles Perrault

Dialogue

Yan Appas

Joan Népami

Director of Photography

Claude Lecompte

In colour

Camera Operators

Eric Faucherre

Max Pantera

Editor

Raymonde Guyot

Production Designers

Michel Guyot

Régis Des Plas

Special Effects

Michel François

Music

Edgar Cosma

Costume Design

Muriel Ghene

Wardrobe

Cécile Balme

Special Mask Effects

Reiko Kruk

Dominique Colladant

Sound Recordist

André Hervé

Sound Re-recordist

Joël Beldent

Sound Effects

André Naudin

Cast

Andrew Chandler

Hélène Dassule

Nicole Palmer

Hamish Scrimgeour

Katherine Scrimgeour

Nicolas Sireau

Rémi Usquin

Valérie Gauthier

The Little Gang

Yveline Ailhaud

Michel Amphoux

Roland Amstutz

Pierre Ascaride

Jean-Pierre Bagot

Nathalie Bécue

Didier Bénureau

Liliane Bertrand

Jacques Blot

Jean Bois

Jacques Canselier

Georges Camier

Marie-Pierre Casey

Pierre Chevallier

François Clavier

Josine Comellas

Dominique Constantin

Roger Comillac

Monique Couturier

Roger Desmare

Claude Drobinski

Yves Elliot

Pierre Forget

Mirielle Franchino

Jean-Louis Grinfeld

Bernard Hocine

Alain Janey

Raphaëlle Janey

Josy Lafont

Pierre Lafont

Philippe Lamendin

François Lugagne

Elisabeth Maby

Alain Maratrat

François Marthouret

Daniel Martin

Michel Melki

Frédérique Pierson

Robin Renucci

Alain Rimoux

Julien Sarfati

Rodolfo de Souza

Gilles Tamiz

Richard Tison

François Toumerkine

Henri Viscogliosi

8,235 feet

91 minutes

Goodbye England, hello Europe

of a child playing the violin. The gang is then involved in a series of escalating adventures. In avoiding a police roadblock, they are kidnapped by a canal boatman but they escape in a giant barrel, leaving one little girl behind. Picked up by gendarmes, they are taken to the Centre Medico-Social whose doctors are driven mad by the children subverting their psychological tests.

The children hitch-hike in various cars, each child discovering that their driver is someone they met earlier on the ferry who, in another and more sinister guise, now attempts to restrain them. Chased by the cars to a cross-roads in a forest, the gang is spirited away in a balloon. While searching for the missing girl, two of the gang track down the canal boatman, leaving a trail of torn clothing for the other children to follow. The trail leads to caves, where the gang discover the adults with dual identities conspiring to dominate the world through exploited child labour.

The gang secretly witness a machine that ages the captive little girl and the hearing-impaired boy, by now their nominal leader. Aided by a helpful man they have encountered before, and who on this occasion freezes the conspirators with a ray gun, the gang reverse the ageing process and they all escape. The pursuing conspirators fall into a trap set by the friendly man. The gang play their theme tune on a powerboat but sail into a storm. They are shipwrecked on a desert island as a final title promises further adventures to come.

The *Little Gang* arrives in this country, nearly ten years after its release in France, courtesy of Squirrel Films, which has claimed a niche in a distribution market that finds little economic advantage in providing films for children beyond the conventional Disney and animated features. *The Little Gang* derives more from children's comics than the sanitised realm of children's classics, with scenes developing in a repeated pattern of capture/struggle/escape, like a Tom and Jerry cartoon. Although it's a live-action drama, there is a moment of animation where cartoon-strip children age into exploited workers. Characters are never named, remain behaviourally

consistent and psychologically undeveloped.

The result is a picaresque structure of the kind that seems to suit the attention span of young children. In other words, *The Little Gang* tends towards the fiction children choose for themselves rather than that chosen for them by adults. The humour is often broad, though it is witty when more whimsical (there are lots of good visual jokes about clothing and appearances), and it has a more lyrical side, constructed through a universe of sound and music, without dialogue of any note (there are no subtitles in the film and none seem necessary).

The effect is to transform the recognisable but nonetheless imaginary landscape through which the gang travel into a moral landscape in which they become a utopian community perpetually in conflict with adults. Undercutting traditional homilies about childish innocence, it is the gang that is purposive and pragmatic rather than adults, who are often at a loss. With the exception of the friendly man and the woman on her deathbed, who can be co-opted into the gang, the moral worlds of child and adult are mutually exclusive. The gang's theatrical 'staging' of the woman's absent son - miming to a record, costumed from her wardrobe and lit by her bedside lamp - is, touchingly, the only moment when the generations are connected rather than divided.

The film draws on an extraordinary range of national stereotypes for its villains (including, surprisingly in a French film, peasants à la Pagnol but with foul table manners), but avoids stereotyping when it comes to the children. More surprising, perhaps, is that the gang is proposed as *English* (some of their antics have a quaint feeling of Home Counties and the Children's Film Foundation adventures of the 1960s). The gang, of course, is escaping from the boredom of Britain (located in what might be taken for a wartime film set of the East End of London, complete with nameplate "Frith Cottage 1891") to the adventure playground of France. But the decision to make the offspring of another country the hero/ines of this 1983 French feature suggests a charmingly premature pan-Europeanism.

David Lusted

The Player

USA 1992

Director: Robert Altman

Certificate

15

Distributor

Ed Lachmann

Guild

Production Company

Avenue Entertainment

Executive Producer

Cary Brokaw

Co-executive Producer

William S. Gilmore

Producers

David Brown

Michael Tolkin

Nick Wechsler

Co-producer

Scott Bushnell

Associate Producer

David Levy

Production Executives

Claudia Lewis

Pamela Hedley

Production Supervisor

Jim Chesney

Production Co-ordinator

Cynthia Hill

Unit Production Manager

Tom Udell

Location Manager

Jack Kney

Extras Casting

Magic Casting

Assistant Directors

Allan Nichols

CC Barnes

Screenplay

Michael Tolkin

Based on his own novel

Director of Photography

Jan Lepine

Colour

DeLuxe

Karaoke Video

Larry "Doc" Karman

Editors

Geraldine Peroni

Film:

Maysie Hoy

Production Designer

Stephen Altman

Art Director

Jerry Fleming

Art Department

Co-ordinator

Michelle Gustello

Set Decorator

Susan Emshwiller

Set Dressers

Matthew Altman

John Buckdin

David Ronan

Jim Samson

June Gudmundsdottir's

Artwork

Sydney Cooper

Special Effects

John Hartigan

Music

Thomas Newman

Orchestrations

Thomas Pasatieri

Music Editor

Bill Bernstein

Songs

"Snake", "Drums of Kyoto" by and performed by Kurt Newman; "Precious" by Les Hooper; "Tema Para Jobim" by Gerry Mulligan, Joyce, performed by Joyce, Milton Nascimento

Costume Design

Alexander Julian

Wardrobe Supervisor

Lydia Tanji

Make-up Artist

Deborah Larsen

Title

Design:

Dan Perri

Painting:

Charles Bragg

Titles/Opticals

Mercer Title & Optical

Supervising Sound Editor

Michael Redbourn

Sound Editors

Joseph Holsen

Ed Lachmann

Sound Recordists

Rich Gooch

John Pritchett

Music:

John Vigran

Foley Recordists

Bob Deschaine

David Jobe

Ultra stereo

Sound Re-recordists

Matt Iadorola

Stanley Kastner

Sound Effects Editor

Ken Burton

Foley Artists

John Post

Paul Holtzborn

Production Assistants

Angie Bonner

John Brown III

Signe Corriere

Steve Day

Kelly Householder

Stunt Co-ordinator

Greg Walker

Animal Trainer

Jim Brockett

Cast

Tim Robbins

Griffin Mill

Greta Scacchi

June Gudmundsdottir

Fred Ward

Walter Stuckel

Whoopi Goldberg

Detective Susan Avery

Peter Gallagher

Larry Levy

Brian James

Joel Levison

Cynthia Stevenson

Bonnie Sherow

Vincent D'Onofrio

David Kahane

Dean Stockwell

Andy Civella

Richard E. Grant

Tom Oakley

Sydney Pollack

Dick Mellen

Man and the woman on her deathbed,

Detective DeLongpre

Dina Merrill

Celia

Angela Hall

Shari Belafonte
Karen Black
Michael Bowen
Gary Busey
Robert Carradine
Charles Champlin
Cher
James Coburn
Cathy Lee Crosby
John Cusack
Brad Davis
Paul Dooley
Thereza Ellis
Peter Falk
Felicia Farr
Kasia Figura
Louise Fletcher
Dennis Franz
Teri Garr
Leeza Gibbons
Scott Glenn
Jeff Goldblum
Elliott Gould
Joel Grey
David Alan Grier
Buck Henry
Angela Huston
Kathy Ireland
Steve James
Maxine John-James
Sally Kellerman
Sally Kirkland
Jack Lemmon

Marlee Matlin
Andie MacDowell
Malcolm McDowell
Jayne Meadows
Martin Mull
Jennifer Nash
Nick Nolte
Alexandra Powers
Bert Remsen
Guy Remsen
Patricia Resnick
Burt Reynolds
Jack Riley
Julia Roberts
Mimi Rogers
Annie Ross
Alan Rudolph
Jill St. John
Susan Sarandon
Adam Simon
Rod Steiger
Joan Tewkesbury
Brian Tochi
Lily Tomlin
Robert Wagner
Ray Walston
Bruce Willis
Marvin Young
Themselves

11,164 feet
124 minutes

Griffin Mill is a young executive at a major Hollywood studio upset by the imminent arrival of another executive, Larry Levy. More worrisome, however, are a series of unsigned postcards Mill has been receiving which threaten his life because of his disdainful treatment of a screenwriter. Unwinding from a day of meetings in a hot tub with his girlfriend, Bonnie Sherow, the studio's story editor, Mill asks her how long she thinks it would take someone to get disturbed enough over a slight to start sending death threats. She suggests about five months, and the next day, going through a computerised log of his unreturned phone calls, Mill comes up with the name of an unproduced screenwriter, David Kahane.

Driving out to Kahane's home, Mill spies on his girlfriend, June Gudmundsdottir, a painter. He then contrives to run 'accidentally' into Kahane, who taunts him about the precariousness of his position at the studio. The infuriated Mill repeatedly strikes and kills him. The next day, arriving late for the first executive meeting where Levy is present, Mill is confronted by the studio's security chief, Walter Stuckel, who tells him that the police know that he was the last person to see Kahane alive. When another anonymous message arrives, Mill realises that Kahane wasn't the poison-pen writer. Attending Kahane's funeral, Mill meets June and takes her home. Back at the studio, Detective Susan Avery, investigating Kahane's murder, expresses scepticism over Mill's story.

In response to another unsigned card, Mill goes to the St James club on Sunset Strip, where he is waylaid by Andy Civella, a would-be producer, and Tom Oakley, an English director who pitches an idea for an anti-capital punishment thriller. Mill later protests his love to June, but she puts him off and says that he should approach her more conventionally. At an executive meeting, Mill lets Levy 'steal' the Oakley idea, which he considers unfilmable,

and then suggests that Bonnie Sherow should be despatched to New York to bid on a new Tom Wolfe novel. The next day, he is taken in by the police and nearly falls apart under Avery's taunting interrogation. Bonnie returns from a successful trip to New York, and accuses Mill of sending her out of town so he could date June.

Mill decides to take June to Mexico, but when he spots police at the airport, takes her to a desert hideaway spa instead. He is called by his agent, Dick Mellen, who tells him that the police have an eyewitness to the murder and want Mill for a line-up. The identification parade is bungled and Mill is freed, becoming in time the studio head. He makes – and bowdlerises in every possible way – the anti-capital punishment movie. Bonnie protests and is sacked. Riding in his limousine, Mill receives a phone call offering him a script where a producer murders a screenwriter and gets away with it. He talks to the writer, who promises Mill a happy ending if the film is made. Mill approves the project and drives home to June, his heavily pregnant wife.

The Hollywood in Robert Altman's *The Player* is a pretty vile place, full of hucksters, climbers, not-talents and fakes of all kinds clambering for a fistful of dollars in the name of cinema's wanton muse. Watching the film is like being cornered at an industry party by a particularly acerbic soul with a lifetime of down and dirty anecdotes on tap. Until Mill actually kills the unproduced screenwriter, David Kahane, much of his, and the film's, time is taken up with rounds of lunches, meetings, lunches, phone calls and lunches in one of the funniest inside digs ever directed at Babylon-on-the-Pacific. Working freely from Michael Tolkin's screenplay (adapted from his own novel), Altman creates a blistering mosaic of supercilious slights and coolly desperate bargains against a background of sunny luxury.

As the slimy Griffin Mill, Tim Robbins is miraculously sympathetic, his panicky attempts to cover his criminal tracks a paradoxical antidote to his more collected machinations at the boardroom level. Fred Ward, as the garulous security chief Walter Stuckel, is a walking paradigm of surly disgust, picking up the messes left by his superiors as he complains about how much better pictures used to be in the days of his dad, a key grip on *Touch of Evil*. However, the greatest casting coup may have been enlisting Brion James as studio chief Joel Levison: a veteran movie villain (the homicidal replicant in *Blade Runner*) who has never quite reached name recognition, his portrayal of the unscrupulous, manipulative and utterly distant executive is assuredly, calmly evil.

Meanwhile, a brigade of stars and show-biz notables pass through the film playing themselves. Cher, Peter Falk, Susan Sarandon, Anjelica Huston, John Cusack, Jeff Goldblum, Burt Reynolds, Buck Henry, Alan Rudolph, Steve Allen, Bruce Willis and Julia

Roberts make up only a portion of the celebrity parade that marches determinedly by, trashing the milieu which created each and every one of their personas. These familiar faces constitute the surface of the world that Altman appears to be unmasking. For stylistically, the film is a throwback to his early successes, full of long, languorous zooms and silkily gliding tracking shots that patiently fasten on, and break down, scene after scene of relay-like interactions.

The film opens with an extraordinarily complex set-up shot that captures the early morning activity at Mill's studio, introducing well over half the principal cast in the process. In case we don't notice how complex it all is, Ward wanders in and out of the scene, talking about how great camera movements were in the old days before all this "MTV cut cut cut". As an exhilarating evocation of how glorious filmmaking can be, the shot works. As does another, when Altman, following Mill as he meets Levison for breakfast, zooms past a post-prandial conversation between Burt Reynolds and film critic Charles Champlin, on to the Mill-Levison table in the background, and then back out between Reynolds and Champlin again, the sound levels virtuously following the shot's visual focus. It perfectly expresses the film's intention to get behind the scenes that are behind the scenes or, in the famous phrase, the tinsel behind the tinsel.

But Altman's old overkill is also present. Every human contact seems to end in at least one party's humiliation, and Altman takes care to point out that the dead Kahane's screenplay (about an American student's year of study in Japan) was more than likely junk. Buck Henry's pitch session is for *The Graduate 2* – to feature Julia Roberts. And Richard E. Grant's English director is ready to sell out his dream picture in a flash; the entire creative community is presented as pompous and barren. There's overkill in the performances as well: when Whoopi Goldberg pulls out a tampon and swings it around while interrogating Mill, it's a moment of self-indulgence to match Geraldine Chaplin's musings over yellow as she wanders irrelevantly through a school-bus parking lot in Nashville.

Inevitably, one must ask, is a world so rancid, so devoid of humanity let alone creativity, worth satirising? And if that world is so awful, how can it produce any works of value, including – or especially – this one? If it's possible to live in this world and yet not be of it, Altman doesn't show us how. The skill of pictures like *The Bad and the Beautiful*, or the earlier versions of *A Star Is Born*, is that they showed how one could be implicated in the dirty commerce, but still produce work of value and even genius. *The Player* shows us the money-grubbing and self-abasement and lets us guess that good movies are just the work of mysterious alchemy. That's hardly a supportable position for a calculatedly maverick individualist like Altman.

Henry Sheehan

The Rapture

USA 1991

Director: Michael Tolkin

Certificate
18
Distributor
Electric Pictures
Production Company
New Line Cinema
In association with
Wechsler/Tenenbaum/
Parker
Executive Producer
Laurie Parker
Producers
Nick Wechsler
Nancy Tenenbaum
Karen Koch
Executive in Charge of Production
Deborah Moore
Production Executive
Cindy Hornickel
Production Controller
Gail Rodono
Production Co-ordinator
Becca Boss
Unit Production Manager
Eric McLeod
Location Manager
David Haldiman
Executive in Charge of Post-production
Joe Fineman
Post-production Supervisor
Leslie Leitner
Casting
Deborah Aquila
Associate:
Jane Shannon
Voice:
Barbara Harris
Extras:
Entertainment Casting Company
Star Casting Service
Assistant Directors
Josh King Douglas
A. Raine
Marcei A. Brubaker
Screenplay
Michael Tolkin
Director of Photography
Bojan Bazelli
Colour
DeLuxe
Camera Operator
George Mooradian
Steadicam Operator
Jeff Mart
Bluescreen Technician
Chuck Schuman
Opticals
Cinema Research Corporation
Editor
Suzanne Fenn
Production Designer
Robin Standefer
Art Director
Kathleen M. McKernin
Set Decorators
Susan Benjamin
Daniel J. Bernard
Thomas Wagner
Set Dressers
Mark Johnson
Kevin Anders
Rosenqvist
Key:
Mark Little
Linette Forbes Shorr
Production Illustrator
Robert Consing
Scenic Artist
Russell Bullock
Storyboard Artist
Michael Anthony
Jackson
Special Effects
Lou Carlucci
William Harrison
Dean W. Miller
Music
Thomas Newman
Music Editor
Bill Bernstein
Songs
"Aguas de Marco" by
Antonio Carlos Jobim,

performed by Elis Regina; "Astronaut Anthem" by Meredith Monk, performed by Meredith Monk and Vocal Ensemble; "Directly from My Heart to You" by Richard Penniman, performed by Little Richard; "I'll Be Your Mirror" by Lou Reed, performed The Velvet Underground; "Ruler of My Heart" by Naomi Neville, performed by Irma Thomas; "Wave" by and performed by Antonio Carlos Jobim; "Well Enough" by Scott Wilk, Julie Christensen, performed by Julie Christensen
Costume Design
Giovanna Melton
Wardrobe
Kristen Anacker
Supervisor:
Karyn Wagner
Make-up
Key:
Deborah Larsen
Swing:
Diana Brown
Tattoo Artist
Deanne Karl Barbi
Title Design
Gary Jacobson
Titles
Title House, Inc
Sound Editors
Dialogue:
Craig Clark
Melissa Peabody
Sound Recordists
David Kelson
Music:
John Vigran
Foley:
Brian Geer
Dolby stereo
Sound Re-recordists
Ken S. Polk
Ken Teamey
Foley:
Jeffrey A. Vaughn
Tommy Goodwin
Digital Sound Effects Editor
Harry Cohen
Foley Artists
Ossama Khuluki
Joan Rowe
Production Assistants
J. P. Bernardo
John Brown III
Michael Zieper
Greg Grant
On-set:
Trey Batchelor
Stunt Co-ordinators
Kane Hodder
Steve Hulin
Stunts
B. J. Davis
Candy Hoskins
Steve Hulin
Henry Kingi
Barbara Ann Klein
Karen E. Laine
Alan Marcus
Lisa McCullough
Jimmy Medearis
Daniel Rogers
Jennifer Watson
Stunt Double
Kane Hodder
Stand-ins
Ted McLaughlin
Elizabeth Tobias
Wrangler
James A. Shugart
Cast
Mimi Rogers
Sharon
David Duchovny
Randy

Patrick Bauchau
Vic
Kimberly Cullum
Mary
Terri Hanauer
Paula
Dick Anthony Williams
Henry
James Le Gros
Tommy
Carole Davis
Angie
Will Patton
Foster
Darwyn Carson
Maggie
Marvin Elkins
Bartender
Stephanie Menuez
Diana
Sam Vlahos
Wayne
Rustam Branan
Conrad
Scott Burkholder
Vince Grant
Evangelists

Patrick Dollaghan
Executive
DeVaughn Nixon
Christian Belnavis
Boys
Victoria Williams
Faithful
Douglas Roberts
Louis
Denney Pierce
Rock Climber
Joshua Farrell
Cashier
Andrew Pressman
Manager
Kerry Leigh Michaels
Guard
Henry Kingi
Linda Albertano
Angels
Michael David Lally
Man on Television

9,014 feet
100 minutes

Sharon works as a telephone information operator in Los Angeles. She cruises the bars at night with her friend, Vic, picking up other couples for casual sex. On one such occasion, she meets Randy and continues to sleep with him afterwards. Meanwhile, at work, Sharon overhears a group of her colleagues talking about a pearl, and about a boy. Later Sharon is visited by two evangelists who tell her that Judgment Day is imminent. During a group sex session, Sharon is fascinated by a strange tattoo of a pearl on the woman, Angie's, back. Sharon becomes increasingly depressed and disenchanted with her life. One day, she picks up a hitch-hiker, Tommy, and takes him to a motel, but then steals his gun and orders him to leave. In despair, she contemplates shooting herself, but finds a Bible and, as she reads it, experiences a vision of the pearl. Sharon tells Vic about her religious conversion, but he laughs at her and they part company.

Sharon discovers that her boss, Henry, is also a believer. He introduces her to a group led by a black boy prophet who predicts the end of the world in five or six years. She asks Randy to be her partner and, reluctant at first because he does not share her faith, he eventually agrees. Six years later, they have a daughter, Mary, and the whole family is dedicated to born-again Christianity. After Randy is murdered by a deranged employee, Sharon sees a vision which she interprets as a sign that she and Mary will be reunited with God and Randy in heaven if they go to the desert.

Sharon's friend Paula gives her a gun to protect herself. Sharon and Mary camp in the desert, where Sheriff Foster takes an interest in their welfare. After several days and nights waiting in vain, Mary pleads with Sharon to kill them both so they can join Randy in heaven. Sharon shoots Mary dead, but is unable to kill herself. After burying her daughter she takes to the road, where she sees visions of the Four Horsemen of the Apocalypse. She is stopped by Foster and confesses to Mary's murder.

In prison, Sharon finds herself in the same cell as Angie, who informs her that the Apocalypse has begun.

Sharon responds that she no longer believes in God. The prison bars crumble and the prisoners walk free. Foster collects Sharon and they drive on his motorbike into the desert, where they come face to face with the Horsemen. Sharon's daughter materialises and offers them both a final chance of redemption. Foster affirms his faith in God and is saved, but Sharon refuses and is left alone in darkness forever.

The *Rapture's* director/writer Michael Tolkin has been quoted as saying that he wanted to create a film which left the audience "thrown back into themselves". He seems to have succeeded, since his audacious attempt to dramatise the end of the world certainly makes one wonder exactly what Tolkin himself believes. In the US, the movie has received a mixed welcome, championed by some as confirming the need for faith in God, derided by others as religious propaganda. Tolkin may have had little trouble in his novel *The Player* scorning the perverse deities who run Hollywood, but he is more hesitant in declaring his feelings about the brand of religious fundamentalism consuming a disturbingly large number of Americans as the twentieth century draws to a close.

At first glance, *The Rapture* seems to belong with the recent wave of films (*The Fisher King*, *Grand Canyon*) featuring heroes in search of something to believe in. Here, a woman joins that disaffected company – not a high-flying lawyer or successful radio DJ, but a telephonist trapped in a boring and isolating job whose apartment, decorated in the style of an anonymous hotel room, is the perfect backdrop for her casual sexual encounters. The heroes of *The Fisher King* and *Grand Canyon* discover salvation in a personal mythology, while Sharon finds hers in off-the-peg Christian evangelism. Tolkin depicts this fundamentalism as a religion found in shopping malls and motels, sold door-to-door by men in suits who might as well be hawking double glazing.



Doing God: Mimi Rogers

Religion is seen as the valium of the people – a panacea for a depressed and frightened woman on the verge of insanity. Both Vic and Randy, Sharon's non-believing sexual partners, initially see her conversion this way, offering traditional secular explanations: "It's just a drug... Instead of doing heroin, you're doing God". But Tolkin's direction and Mimi Rogers' compelling performance ensure the audience's sympathy for Sharon. Equal weight is given to her boss Henry's remark that "The unbelievers make out that we're stupid, that there's something wrong with us". However, the theological debate never rises above the level of the slogans found on evangelical posters decorating bus shelters.

Religion is seen to offer a haven to its followers – until it is tested. As converts, Sharon and Randy enjoy an affluent suburban life style. This is certainly not a faith that eschews materialism: Sharon carefully chooses the dresses that she and Mary will wear for their meeting with God. But such details as this, or Sharon mistaking a car alarm for the clarion call, are not depicted with any irony. And Armageddon is similarly represented straight, via a series of singularly tacky images – the Grim Reaper and the Four Horsemen look like something out of a greetings card-style Book of Revelations. Obviously, budget restrictions played some part in this (in Tolkin's original script, the rapture happens to a number of people who levitate from their cars up into the heavens). But this cheap, literal iconography, envisaging the end of the world in cartoon terms, is the stuff of evangelical TV programming, and is the imagery that Sharon, as a believer, would accept.

The Rapture could be seen as being primarily about Sharon's disturbed state of mind, with which, unnervingly, the audience becomes increasingly involved. Having achieved a kind of mental stability through religion, Sharon then finds it shattered by the violent death of her husband. Once again, she deals with the trauma through her faith, which sanctions her bizarre journey into the wilderness. But this, and the subsequent murder of Mary, are undeniably the actions of a psychotic. Sharon's madness might have been explored to provide a tragic, melodramatic core to the film. But Tolkin's distanced style refuses any emotional impact, even to the killing of a daughter by her mother.

Sharon's trials in the desert may have Biblical and mythical overtones – as an inversion of the story of Abraham and Isaac, for instance – but ultimately they are seen as part of her drive to self-destruction. Even when she 'comes to her senses' and disavows God, it is too late: she is left alone in the darkness of limbo. This is an appropriately ambiguous metaphor with which to end an alienating film. *The Rapture* offers no easy redemptive resolution; rather it leaves us with an irritating sense that Tolkin wants to have his milk and honey and eat it too.

Lizzie Francke

Ruby

USA 1992

Director: John MacKenzie

Certificate

15

Distributor

Rank

Production Company

Propaganda Films

Executive Producer

Michael Kuhn

Executive-in-charge

of Production

Tim Clawson

Executive Production

Co-ordinator

Gigi Giraudo

Producers

Sigurjon Sighvatsson

Steve Golin

Co-producer

Jay Roewe

Associate Producers

Richard Wright

Lynn Weimer

Production Supervisor

Ellen Gordon

Production Co-ordinators

Rita Rokisky Barbanell

Annie Mei-Ling Tien

Dallas:

Sandy Jentzen

Unit Production Manager

Ron Fury

Location Managers

Lisa Strout

Puerto Rico:

Rica Groennou

Post-production Supervisors

Diana Seel

Additional:

Scott Carleton

Post-production Co-ordinator

Elizabeth Fox

Casting

Johanna Ray

Associate:

Elaine J. Huzzar

Extras:

Dixie Webster

The Casting Group

Dallas:

Rody Kent and Associates

Extras Dallas:

Barbara Blanchette

Puerto Rico:

Zoraida Sanjurjo

Assistant Directors

Matthew Carlisle

Richard Oswald

Dallas:

Terri S. Martin

Screenplay

Stephen Davis

Based on his play

Love Field

Photography

Phil Meheux

Colour

DeLuxe

2nd Unit Photography

Brian Tufano

Camera Operators

Additional:

Paul Hughen

Dallas:

Robert Allen Driskell

Jnr

Steadicam Operators

Chris Haarhoff

Dallas:

Ralph Watson

Video Playback Supervisor

Selma Gladney

Graphic Design

Cameron Smith

Editor

Richard Trevor

Production Designer

David Brisbin

Art Director

Kenneth A. Hardy

Art Department

Co-ordinator

Paolo DeLeon

Set Design

Eric Compton

Dallas: Mary Finn

Set Decorators

Lauri Gaffin

Dallas:

Jeanette Scott

Set Dressers

Theodor Reinke

Dallas:

Tana Bishop

Lance Cheatham

Paul Etheredge-Ouzts

Draftsman

Aida Blanco

Production Illustrator

John L. Jensen

Lead Scenic Artists

Chris Winslow

Palm Springs:

Robert Newman

Scenic Artists

Bettina Andresen

Amy E. Blount

Nick Dorr

Tanya Hamilton

James MacDonald

B.J. Manning

Rudy Mercado

Suzette Yadusky

Special Effects

Co-ordinator

Kenny Estes

Special Effects Supervisor

Jack Bennett

Special Effects

John M. Wells

Music/Music Director

John Scott

Carousel Club Music

Barry Goldberg

Music Supervisors

Evgen Klean

Paul Broucek

Tim Simonec

Music Editors

Steve Livingston

Ken Johnson

Preview:

Scott Stambler

Songs

"Blues in the Night"

by Johnny Mercer,

Harold Arlen,

performed by Amy

Weston, Sherilyn Fenn;

"Day In, Day Out" by

Johnny Mercer, Rube

Bloom, performed by

Patrick Judge; "It Had

to Be You" by Gus

Kahn, Isham Jones,

performed by Sherilyn

Fenn; "We Need

Country Music"

by Warner Wilder,

performed by Garland

Frary; "Since I First

Met You" by H.B.

Barnum, performed

by The Robins; "A Little

Minor Booze" by Willie

Maiden, performed by

Stan Kenton Orchestra;

"Amazing Grace"

(trad.)

Choreography

Vincent Paterson

Costume Design

Susie DeSanto

Wardrobe Supervisor

Kathryn V. Davis

Costumers

Key:

Gail Just

Set:

Dina Laquaglia

Melissa Merwin

Eva L. Prappas

Dallas:

Janet Lucas Lawler

Make-up Artists

Vickey Ogden-

Sutherland

Danny Aiello;

Debbie Zoller

Puerto Rico:

Migdalia Correa

Sound Design

Paul Clay

Morris Paton
Jogger
Tony Sibbald
Bald Man in Suit
Jason Watkins
Coroner's Assistant
Tina Shaw
Night-club Stripper
Papillon Soo Lam
Waitress
Rikki Howard
Cage Security
Policewoman
Rob Edmunds
Alan Stocks
Padraig Casey
Policemen
The Shend
Precinct Policeman
Susan Aderin

Sheila Hyde
Jan Van Nool
Jan Walker
Precinct Policewoman
Angie Hill-Richmond
Nurse
Havoc
Dog
Vanessa Victor
Jadene Doran
Lorraine Pascal Woodward
Lisa Roudette
Bibi Bohorquez
Mayumi Cabrera
Women in Night-club
Bill Baker
Hovercraft Pilot

8,131 feet
90 minutes

London, 2008. Part-flooded as a result of global warming, the city is also under renewed threat from a ferocious serial killer. Maverick cop Harold Stone, who has unofficially pursued the murderer since the death of his partner, Foster MacLaine, three years ago, is reassigned to the case by police chief Thrasher following the dismemberment of a girl at a night-club. The victim's heart has been torn out and sent to Stone in an ice-box, signalling a personal vendetta against him. Thrasher teams Stone with a new partner, Durkin, a freshly graduated detective who provokes Stone's contempt when he interprets a cypher scrawled in blood at the site of the next murder as the sign of Scorpio.

Stone runs into Foster's widow, Michelle, on one of her rare visits to London, and warns her that Foster's killer is still at large. They spend the night at Stone's apartment. Next morning, when Stone leaves with Durkin, Michelle is threatened by the killer. But when Stone and Durkin rush back, they find her unharmed except for a bitten shoulder; instead, a girl is being attacked in the apartment below. In a fierce gun battle, Durkin is shot down (but, thanks to his bullet-proof vest, quickly recovers) while Stone is unable to prevent the attacker from escaping.

Later, realising that the corpse's heart had not yet been removed, they go to the morgue in time to get their first clear sight of their opponent, a humanoid monster which absorbs the strength and DNA structure of its victims. Durkin's theory is that it is of demonic origin, the Scorpio sign linking it with Satan. Returning to his apartment, Stone finds a terrified Michelle in the bath and a human heart on a plate in the fridge. Durkin stands guard, armed with the latest in police weaponry, but Stone later finds him tied up; a cryptic chart clawed across his bare chest.

They decipher this to mean that the monster's lair is at Cannon Street Underground, now a sealed-off area below the London water-table. With the help of the Rat Catcher, eccentric guardian of London's sewers, they negotiate the secret shafts and tunnels leading to the derelict underground station where Michelle, hanging helplessly from a rope, is the bait for a final confrontation. After a failed attempt to electrocute the monster, Stone realises what is required of him: wrestling with the creature, he pulls out its heart and

blasts it to pieces. With Michelle and Durkin, he returns to the city's surface, unaware that the waters below are still churning with grim portent.

Adrift and up-ended on the swamps of *Split Second* is the wreckage of a potentially interesting story (updated, perhaps, to the era of the Toxic Avenger from Corman's nuclear-haunted *Attack of the Crab Monsters*) in which a cop's murdered partner returns as part of a mutated organism to avenge his own death. In the process, he becomes jealous of the cop's interest in his former wife, a tension which leads to some graphic heart-rending. But Gary Scott Thompson's version, originally scripted as *Pentangle*, chokingly complicates the issue by introducing hints of the occult.

The unhelpful suggestion that the serial killer is Satanic makes nonsense of the creature's obsession with Rutger Hauer, whose activities show little Messianic inspiration. In fact, the film reveals its true colours when the creature is at least shown in close-up: the mechanoid talons and dripping snarl have been copied without apology from Giger's nightmare (several of the designers of *Split Second* worked on *Aliens* and *Alien 3*), and the result is just another bogey-man encounter, pretext for all the usual splash-and-grab excesses.

Wading into the fray complete with cigar, granny-glasses, shotgun and uneasy flashes of recollection, Hauer cuts an unlikely figure, knows it, and saves face by lampooning whatever is not already comical by overstatement. Along with the imported and clumsily wasted Michael J. Pollard, a sad roster of British talents – including the invaluable Alun Armstrong, Peter Postlethwaite and Ian Dury – are speedily submerged in brief and irrelevant roles. The only real lifesaver of the event is cinematographer Clive Tickner, who elegantly switches course from the serene landscapes of *Anglo-Saxon Attitudes* to the cut-price shallows of a flooded London (a potent arena which the script and special effects proceed largely to ignore) in order to portray a truly purgatorial clash of mists and colours.

Philip Strick



Into the fray: Rutger Hauer

Straight Talk

USA 1992

Director: Barnet Kellman

Certificate

PG

Distributor

Warner Bros

Production Company

Hollywood Pictures

Company

In association with

Sandollar Productions

Executive Producers

Sandy Gallin

Carol Baum

Howard Rosenman

Producers

Robert Chartoff

Fred Berner

Associate Producer

Lynn Hendee

Production Co-ordinator

Judy Pritchard

Unit Production Manager

Joseph P. Kane

Location Managers

Patricia D. Lydon

Illinois:

Demetra

Diamantopoulos

Georgia:

Gina Gascino

2nd Unit Directors

Illinois:

Jeffrey Townsend

Georgia:

Victor Hammer

Casting

Mary Gail Artz

Barbara Cohen

Extras:

Knutsen-Satterlee

Assistant Directors

John T. Kretchmer

John L. Roman

Normann Pokorny

Illinois:

Tom Busch

Screenplay

Craig Bolotin

Patricia Resnick

Story

Craig Bolotin

Director of Photography

Peter Sova

Colour

Technicolor

2nd Unit Photography

Alan Thatcher

Camera Operators

Joe Marquette Jnr

Georgia:

Alec Hirshfeld

Opticals

Buena Vista Optical

Editor

Michael Tronick

Production Designer

Jeffrey Townsend

Art Director

Michael T. Perry

Art Department

Co-ordinator

Ross F. Aseron

Set Design

Suzan Wexler

Set Decorator

Daniel L. May

Set Dresser

Dara Lauren Waxman

Illustrator

Kalina Ivanov

Special Effects

Co-ordinator

Guy Clayton Jnr

Music

Brad Fiedel

Music Editor

Allan K. Rosen

Songs

"Blue Grace", "Light of a Clear Blue Morning",

"Dirty Job", "Blue Me",

"Straight Talk", "Fish Out of Water", "Livin' a Lie" by Dolly Parton,

"Burning", "Thought I Couldn't Dance",

"Burning to Burned" by Dolly Parton, Bill Owens, performed

by Dolly Parton;

"Helena Polka"

performed by Lawrence

Welk; "Back to Back"

by Irving Berlin,

performed by Glenn

Miller; "Take Two"

Choreography

Miranda Garrison

Costume Design

Jodie Tilden

Key Costume Supervisor

Robert Chase

Wardrobe Supervisor

Carolyn Schraut

Barczak

Costumer

Shirlee Strahm

Head Make-up Artist

Hallie D'Amore

Make-up Artists

Linda V. Melazzo

James Woods:

Deborah Lamia

Denver

Title Design

Wayne Fitzgerald

Supervising Sound Editor

Fred Judkins

Sound Editors

David Lee Hagberg

James Matheny

Mary Ruth Smith

Peter Michael Sullivan

Supervising ADR Editor

Renée Tondelli

ADR Editors

Jonathan Klein

Nicholas Korda

Sound Recordists

Glenn Williams

Music:

Tim Boyle

ADR Recordist

Doc Kane

ADR Group

L.A. Maddogs

Foley Recordists

Gary Hecker

Eric Gotthelf

Dolby stereo

Sound Re-recordists

Rick Ash

David Campbell

Dean A. Zupancic

Dubbing

Larry Pitman

Foley Artists

Jeff Wilhoit

Jimmy Moriana

Zane Bruce

Creative Song Consultant

Carol Hall

Key Production Assistant

Michael "Nubs"

Phillips

Production Assistants

Wendy Brokaw

Robert Cable

Kevin Kane

Mark Niedelson

Mark Phillip Raff

Jeff Richman

Michael D. Starcevic

Frank Vivacqua

Laurel Wolowicz

Stunt Co-ordinators

Conrad E. Palmisano

2nd Unit:

Rick Lefevour

Stunts

Frank P. Calzavara

James Fierro

Barbara Anne Klein

Steve Lambert

Stacy Logan

Dan Maldonado

Kay H. Whipple

Helicopter Pilot

Harold Hauss

Cast

Dolly Parton

Shirlee Kenyon

James Woods

Jack Russell

Griffin Dunne

Alan Riegert

Michael Madsen

Steve Labell

Deirdre O'Connell

Lily

John Sayles

Guy Girardi

Teri Hatcher

Janice

Spalding Gray

Dr Erdman

Jerry Orbach

Milo Jacoby

Philip Bosco

Gene Perlman

Charles Fleischer

Tony

Keith MacKechnie

Gordon

Jay Thomas

Zim Zimmerman

Amy Morton

Ann

Paula Newsome

Ellen

Ralph Foody

Desk Clerk

Robin Eurich

Bill

Jeff Garlin

Bob

Paul Dinello

Casey

Barnet Kellman

Director

Robert Kurcz

Phil

Ray Toler

Man at Strip Joint

Michael Oppenheimer

Maitre d'

Michael Jeffrey Woods

Photographer

Tom Amandes

John Gegenhuber

Waiters

James Spinks

Greg Sobieski

Bartenders

Scott Benjaminson

Valet

8,151 feet

91 minutes

Shirlee Kenyon, a dance instructor in small-town Arkansas, is sacked because she spends too much time giving personal advice to her clients. Disillusioned with life with her slothful, long-term unemployed partner Steve, she packs her bags and heads for Chicago. There she meets Jack Russell, a journalist, who thinks he is saving her life as she retrieves some dropped money on a bridge; and she advises Janice, whom she meets in a coffee bar, to leave her workaholic, thoughtless partner – who turns out to be Jack.

Shirlee finds work as a telephone operator with WNDY, a radio station eager to boost its ratings by employing a new on-air psychologist. Shirlee is mistaken for Dr. Kendall, and immediately finds herself before the microphone giving out advice. When WNDY executive Alan discovers what has happened he fires her. But Shirlee's performance has been ecstatically received by the listeners, and Alan now offers her her own programme. He warns her, however, not to reveal anything about her past. Jack recognises Shirlee – fast becoming a celebrity – on television and sees in her the opportunity for the good story that has been eluding him. He makes a date with her, and at dinner she tells him about her past.

Shirlee's success and fame continue. She is invited to appear on the Zim Zimmerman show with another psychologist; to the audience

her guilt that she is working under false pretences. Jack's investigations meanwhile take him to Arkansas, where he meets Steve, who later recognises him in Shirlee's luxury apartment. They fight, which serves only to strengthen the relationship between Shirlee and Jack.

But when Steve tells Shirlee of his meeting with Jack, she refuses to speak to him, notwithstanding that he has given up both the story and his job. She is also confronted by a distraught wife abandoned on the basis of advice she gave her husband. Realising that her advice can cause real unhappiness, Shirlee breaks down during her first coast-to-coast broadcast and quits. Jack rushes out and finds her on the same bridge where they first met. It is midnight, and there is a sudden clamour of horns being honked - her audience responding, as they have been asked, to tell Shirlee that they love her. Jack suggests a fresh start.

No film starring Dolly Parton could have its heart other than firmly in the right place, and *Straight Talk* duly obliges. In Shirlee Kenyon the scriptwriters have come up with an agony aunt as honest and unpretentious as the advice she compulsively doles out. Of course, Dolly and Shirlee are, to all intents and purposes, indistinguishable, and the film none too skilfully exploits Ms Parton's status as a country and western star. The narrative is punctuated by her songs - they round off each piece of action, thereby establishing the film's moral tone.

And that morality is, predictably, fairly facile. Life is an uphill struggle; you have to take the rough with the smooth; as a woman you have to fend for yourself; as a person you must be true to yourself, and so on. The film's pretensions are mildly feminist, as illustrated by the sequence in which, appearing on a celebrity show, Shirlee mocks the opinion of a Harvard-educated male psychologist that the wife in question is to blame for her husband's infidelity. Shirlee herself is presented as the beleaguered product of a harsh and unfair male world, three times divorced from the same man, and now forced into leaving her present partner. She deserves better, and is smart enough to realise it.

But this is a theme which is not pursued, in the interests, no doubt, of the more pedestrian romantic-comedy element. Shirlee may stand up for put-upon wives, but she does not stand up to the male establishment epitomised, in particular, by the executives running the radio station. The homespun advice of this undecieving "doctor of the heart" is more irritating than it is restorative; nor is it redeemed by the central romantic pairing, in which James Woods does not always appear entirely at ease. The film is directed with aplomb by Barnet Kellman (who has a background in television comedy), and who succeeds in jollying things along with innocuous enthusiasm.

Alan Taylor

Turtle Beach

Australia 1992

Director: Stephen Wallace

Certificate

15

Distributor

Warner Bros

Production Company

Roadshow, Coote & Carroll

Executive Producers

Greg Coote
Graham Burke

Producer

Matt Carroll

Line Producer

Irene Dobson

Production Supervisor

Santa Pestonji

Production Co-ordinator

Sharon Miller

Production Manager

Fiona McConaghy

Unit Manager

Richard Montgomery

Location Manager

Phillip Roope

Casting

Alison Barrett

Extras:

Gabrielle Healy

Assistant Directors

Colin Fletcher

Nikki Long

Guy Campbell

Screenplay

Ann Turner

Based on the novel

by Blanche d'Alpuget

Director of Photography

Russell Boyd

In colour

Underwater Photography

Robert Hunter

Camera Operator

David Williamson

Graphics

Jane Murphy

Supervising Editor

William Anderson

Editors

Lee Smith

Louise Innes

Production Designer

Brian Thomson

Art Director

Robert Dein

Set Decorators

Kerrie Brown

Glen Johnson

David McKay

Murray Kelly

Kathy Moyes

Scenic Artist

Eric Todd

Special Effects Supervisors

Brian Cox

David Hardie

Music

Chris Neal

Costume Design

Roger Kirk

Costume Supervisor

Kerry Thompson

Make-up Artist

Lesley Rouvray

Sound Editor/ADR Editor

Tim Jordan

Foley Editor

Steve Burgess

Sound Recordists

Ben Osmo

Music:

Ian Davidson

ADR Recordist

Simon Hewitt

Foley Recordist

Steve Burgess

Dolby stereo

Consultant:

Steve Murphy

Sound Re-recordist

Phil Judd

Sound Effects Editor

Wayne Pashley

Sound Effects Designer

Peter Townend

Foley Artist

Gerry Long

Stunt Co-ordinator

Glenn Boswell

Stunts

Bernadette Van Gyen

Richard Boue

Michelle Rowe

Cast

Greta Scacchi

Judith Wilkes

Joan Chen

Lady Minou Hobday

Jack Thompson

Ralph Hamilton

Art Malik

Kanan

Norman Kaye

Sir Adrian Hobday

Victoria Longley

Sancha Hamilton

Martin Jacobs

Richard

William McInnes

Minder

George Whaley

Bill

Andrew Ferguson

David

Daniel de Leur

Peter

Celia Wong

Amah

Monroe Reimers

Mohammed

Stuart Campbell

Nigel

Kee Chan

Behzad

Patrick Dickson

Julian

François Bocquet

Véronique Bernard

French Reporters

Sean Scully

John Howitt

Businessmen

Shane McNamara

Hotel Waiter

Daam Dasakorn

Inspector Hussein

Sumit Sachathep

Indian Beheaded

Virat Rujiwattananong

Nimit Limpanon

Chinese Butchers

Greeya Vaema

Sommai Subsaithong

Malay Youths

Patnida Kaijang

Amavarin Intrisak

Market Girls

Meesak Nakarat

Tunku Jamie

Ratchanok Pilapalin

Tunku Bernice

Grieng-Grai Lerssak

Taxi Driver

Suksom Maphibul

Nopparat Puttattananame

Gate Guards

Paew Choke-Dee

Hamilton Servant

Pichai Cherdvivatasin

Chinese Waiter

Gina Rowe

Englishwoman

Visan Chatrangsilak

Mr Ling

Nares Sri-Ngamrat

Malay Official

Wuth Kongkakat

Bidong Sergeant

Lertporn Arayakosol

Bidong Policeman

Nadlada Boonyamalik

Lan

Mun Sae Lim

Old Chinese Monk

Somboon Poutaroth

Old Crane

Somsak Saengvilai

Vietnamese Man

on Bidong

Chai Chapanond

Economist Refugee

Apichart Halumjiek

Bidong Doctor

Pattana U-Pat

Minou's Daughter

Joe Polkai

Pongsatorn

Vachiramatthikul

Minou's Sons

7,927 feet

88 minutes

Malaysia, 1969. Reporter Judith Wilkes is caught up in the racial violence of Asian society. Ten years later in Sydney, separated from her husband, Richard, and with her two young sons in boarding-school, she decides to return to cover the plight of the Vietnamese boat people when the story of their internment in Malaysia breaks. Before leaving Sydney, she meets with the enigmatic Lady Minou Hobday, wife of the Australian High Commissioner to Malaysia, Sir Adrian Hobday; Minou is an ex-prostitute from Saigon and herself a refugee. Once back in Malaysia, Judith follows Sir Adrian to an assignment with the mysterious Kanan; the latter assures him that Minou, who has disappeared, is safe at the beach where she always goes.

Judith goes to stay with her old friend Sancha Hamilton, whose husband, Ralph, is the Head of Immigration at the Australian High Commission. He refuses to take Judith to the internment camps at Bidong Island, and when she reports on a violent incident that she witnesses, threatens to cancel her visa. At dinner with Sancha and Ralph, Judith is surprised to meet Kanan, who is somehow mixed up with the refugee situation. She meanwhile renews contact with Minou, who enlists her help at Turtle Beach where a boatload of refugees is due to arrive. There Judith witnesses the brutal slaughter of men, women and children by Malaysians determined to prevent them from coming ashore.

Police arrive to stop the massacre, Judith and Minou are released into Kanan's care, and Judith and Kanan later make love. When Judith learns that one of her boys is ill, but refuses to return to Sydney, Richard threatens to sue for custody of the children. Minou tells Judith that she had to leave her own three children behind in Vietnam; her vigil at Turtle Beach is for them. Ralph cancels Judith's visa, but with Minou's help she blackmails him into taking her to Bidong where, unknown to Sancha, he has a young mistress, Lan.

Judith is shocked by the filth and degradation of the internment camp (the corruption and black marketeering involves both Ralph and Kanan). Ralph is badly beaten by the camp police when he protests at the way Lan has been disgraced on a trumped-up charge. Minou takes Judith back to Turtle Beach to help rescue her children, who are on the next boat. Minou goes out to meet them in a dinghy while angry Malaysians gather at the water's edge. But Minou drowns herself and the Malaysians, allowing the refugees to come ashore safely. Judith, unable to understand either Minou's action or Kanan's apparently callous response, returns to Sydney where she decides to take her boys out of boarding-school.

The opening scenes of *Turtle Beach* find Greta Scacchi's reporter caught up in a violent street battle between warring Malaysian factions. Giddy with fear and excitement,



On the scene: Greta Scacchi

she snaps away indiscriminately at the bloodshed, until being rescued by a male colleague. It's a fair indication of the messy confusion of worn-out cliché, undeveloped characterisation and muddled subject matter that follows. Whatever the causes of racial and religious hatred in this multi-cultural society, they surely do not begin and end with the ignorant rabble, with the film's generalised portrayal of Malaysians as prejudiced, superstitious, bloodthirsty murderers.

Similarly, the corrupt Australian officialdom, if it be so, is dealt with in a cursory manner, with the wider and more interesting question of racist Australian immigration policies being virtually ignored. The script is written almost completely from Judith's point of view, so that Minou's behaviour, Kanan's role and Ralph Hamilton's guardedness are only clarified three-quarters of the way through. Until then, the lack of explanation is both mystifying and tedious, and the dramatic tension that needs to be built for the final scene on Turtle Beach completely lacking. This makes Minou's sacrificial gesture unintelligible and maybe just another side of her flighty and wearisomely impulsive character. The friendship between Judith and Minou is unconvincing; both characters lack moral depth and their 'chalk and cheese' relationship seems uncomfortably shallow.

Turtle Beach is the stuff of TV mini-series - exoticism, action, romance, all played at breakneck speed. It is appropriate then that the best scene (which also allows Greta Scacchi to slip into *Presumed Innocent* mode) is probably Judith's fleeting sexual encounter with Kanan. By contrast, one of the most embarrassing scenes features Joan Chen (beloved of *Twin Peaks* fans) getting down on the middle-aged Sir Adrian "Papa" Hobday, whispering brothel-talk nothings in his ear. The contrasting encounters illuminate practically nothing except the casual corruption of the flesh at all levels in this alien society.

Jill McGreal

VIDEO

Mark Kermode reviews rental/rental premiere videos released this month and William Green reviews retail/retail premiere videos

Rental

The Addams Family

Columbia TriStar CVT 12810
USA 1991

Certificate PG

Director Barry Sonnenfeld
Disjointed hotchpotch of a film, inspired more by the 60s TV sit-com than by Charles Addams' comic strip. Good special effects, some ghoulish giggles, but what happened to the plot? (S&S January 1992)

Bill & Ted's Bogus Journey

20.20 Vision NVT 13651
USA 1991

Certificate PG Director Peter Hewitt
★ "Non-non-non-heinous" sequel to Steve Herek's "most excellent" original. Bill and Ted die, go to Hell, outwit Death, defeat evil robot versions of themselves and save the future...again! Laughs of "unprecedented" proportions. (S&S January 1992)

Hangin' with the Homeboys

20.20 Vision NVT 11619
USA 1991

Certificate 15 Director Joseph B. Vasquez
★ A wise comedy following the adventures of four macho Bronx boys having a night on the town. Vasquez's debut as a writer/director shows enormous talent as he reveals the fear in the hearts of these 'real men'. (S&S December 1991)

Iron Maze

First Independent VA 20157
USA/Japan 1991

Certificate 15 Director Hiroaki Yoshida
Visually arresting, thematically intriguing but ultimately unsatisfying pseudo-political thriller set amongst the steel mills of Pennsylvania's 'Rust Belt'. (S&S December 1991)

London Kills Me

Columbia TriStar CVT 13774
UK 1991

Certificate 18 Director Hanif Kureishi
Relentless and dreary tale about no-hoper London drug dealers attempting to pull off an ambitious

deal, and Clint, a poor man in search of shoes. The script, direction and performances are as miserable as the characters themselves. (S&S December 1991)

Mannequin on the Move

Warner PEV 90072
USA 1991

Certificate PG Director Stewart Raffill
A film that manages to be sexist, racist and homophobic. This sequel to the equally terrible original comes from the director of *Mac and Me*. (S&S November 1991)

Necessary Roughness

CIC Video VHB 2595
USA 1991

Certificate 15 Director Stan Dragoti
Predictable 'salvation through sport' comedy. A middle-aged football player is called back to college to save the team. Final score: Nil. (S&S April 1992)

Only the Lonely

FoxVideo 1877
USA 1991

Certificate 15 Director Chris Columbus
★ Delightful romantic comedy with John Candy cutting loose from his domineering mother (Maureen O'Hara) to find love with a neurotically shy mortician (Ally Sheedy). Strong cast, wry script and a heart-warming ending. (S&S September 1991)

The People Under the Stairs

CIC Video VHA 1558
USA 1991

Certificate 18 Director Wes Craven
★ Craven's best movie since *A Nightmare on Elm Street* - a ghoulish fairytale about a poor black kid who rebels against his fiendish white landlords. Horror-comedy with a message in its madness, boasting thrills and grisly laughs. (S&S February 1992)

The Pleasure Principle

Palace PVC 2284R
UK 1991

Certificate 18 Director David Cohen
Shoestring budget, pseudo-psychological sex farce promising lascivious delights but failing to deliver. (S&S February 1992)

Most excellent: Alex Winter, William Sadler, Keanu Reeves in 'Bill and Ted's Bogus Journey'

Switch

Columbia TriStar CVT 12759
USA 1991

Certificate 15 Director Blake Edwards
Ellen Barkin stars in this patchy sex change comedy. A philanderer is killed by his ex-girlfriends, sent to Purgatory and delivered back to earth as a woman. *Tootsie* was far better. (S&S January 1992)

Under Suspicion

20.20 Vision NVT 14028
UK 1991

Certificate 18 Director Simon Moore
★ Stylised and stylish *noir* pastiche, packed with melodramatic hyperbole and hard-boiled hysteria. Divorce detective Liam Neeson falls for a murdered artist's mistress. Over-the-top fun. (S&S October 1991)

V.I. Warshawski

Hollywood Pictures D912542
USA 1991

Certificate 15 Director Jeff Kanew
Flimsy pilot for a projected series of adaptations based on Sara Paretsky's cult female detective novels. Kathleen Turner is fine in the lead but Kanew's limp, TV-style direction lets her down. (S&S January 1992)

What About Bob?

Touchstone D312242
USA 1991

Certificate PG Director Frank Oz



Neurotics: Richard Dreyfuss, Bill Murray

★ Bill Murray excels in Oz's surprisingly dark comedy about the destruction of a psychiatrist's life by his multi-phobic patient. There is much uncomfortable laughter as the doctor (Richard Dreyfuss) is driven to psychopathic revenge. (S&S November 1991)

Rental premiere

Body Parts

CIC Video VHB 2566
USA 1991

Certificate 18 Director Eric Red Producer Frank Mancuso Jnr Screenplay Eric Red, Norman Snider, based on the novel *Choice Cuts* by Boileau-Narcejac Lead Actors Jeff Fahey, Lindsay Duncan, Brad Dourif, Zakes Mokae 85 minutes
★ Great horror pic (directed by the writer of 'The Hitcher'), shamelessly



stealing from such classics as *Hands of Orlac*. A criminal psychologist (Fahey) loses an arm and receives a replacement graft from a murderer. Gory effects, deadpan acting and the voice-over psycho-babble make this an unmissable treat.

Captive

Capital CHV 1031
USA 1991

Certificate 15 Director Michael Tuchner
Producers Geoffrey Cowan, Julian Fowles, Michael Rhodes Screenplay Leonie Sandercock Lead Actors Joanna Kerns, Barry Bostwick, John Stamos, Chad Lowe, Patricia Charbonneau 90 minutes

True-life drama about a couple who own a motel and are taken hostage by two drug-crazed prison escapees. Rape, torment and anguish ensue.

Carnal Crimes

Medusa MC 375
USA 1991

Certificate 18 Director Alexander Hippolyte Producer Andrew Garroni Screenplay Jon Robert Samsel Lead Actors Martin Hewitt, Linda Carol, Rich Crater, Yvette Stefens, Alex Kubick 94 minutes
More 'suspense in suspenders' frolics from Hippolyte, the Paul Raymond of Rental Premiere titles. A bored Beverly Hills wife falls for an arty-porn photographer who turns out to be a psychopath. No surprises from the plot, visuals or musical score.

Dead On

Warner PEV 35489
USA 1991

Certificate 18 Director Michael Schroeder Producer Lisa M. Hansen Screenplay Mark Sevi Lead Actors Ray Sharkey, Leo Rossi, Meg Foster, Miles O'Keefe 90 minutes
★ Subtitled 'Relentless II', this gripping thriller makes only passing reference to William Lustig's original. A detective (Rossi) tracks a serial killer, aided (or hindered?) by an FBI agent (Sharkey). Sinister undertones of black magic are subtly evoked by Sevi's script and Jamie Thompson's photography. Genuinely creepy.



Whoopi Goldberg and Lexi Faith Randall in 'The Long Walk Home'



Male bonding: Nestor Serrano, Mario Joyner, Doug E. Doug in 'Hangin' with the Homeboys'

Empire City

Warner PEV 12502
USA 1991

Certificate 15 Director Mark Rosner Producer Brooke Kennedy Screenplay Mark Rosner Lead Actors Michael Pare, Mary Mara, Beau Starr, Peter Frechette, Ron Vawter 78 minutes
A promiscuous homicide detective (Michael Pare) is compromised by an alluring victim-cum-suspect - not impressing his hard-nosed partner (Mary Mara). Promising thriller which descends into laughable sub-Chinatown plot twists.

Field of Fire

CIC Video VHA 1537
USA 1991

Certificate 15 Director Cirio Santiago Producer Christopher Santiago Screenplay Thomas McKelvey Cleaver Lead Actors Jim Moss, David Carradine, Eb Lottimer, David Anthony Smith 84 minutes
Yet another 'missing in action' Vietnam war pic. The usual team of crack marines go through all the usual shenanigans to rescue the usual lost pilot.

Fires Within

Warner MGM/UA PEV 54241
USA 1991

Certificate 15 Director Gillian Armstrong Producers Wallis Nicita, Lauren Lloyd Screenplay Cynthia Cidre Lead Actors Jimmy Smits, Greta Scacchi, Vincent D'Onofrio 83 minutes
'Steamy' action-romance. An exiled Cuban woman is torn between love for her husband (an ex-political prisoner) and a strapping boatman. Havana stole from *Casablanca* more effectively.

The Hitman

Warner/Cannon PEV 32045
USA 1991

Certificate 18 Director Aaron Norris

Producer Don Carmody Screenplay Robert Geoffrion Lead Actors Chuck Norris, Michael Parks, Alberta Watson 90 minutes

A double-crossed cop (Norris) is seriously wounded and left for dead, he then returns as an undercover hitman for the DEA. Gratuitous shoot-outs and enjoyable mayhem are spoilt by a silly sub-plot about Norris being nice to children.

The Human Shield

Warner/Cannon PEV 32031
USA 1991

Certificate 15 Director Ted Post Producer Christopher Pearce Screenplay Mann Rubin Lead Actors Michael Dudikoff, Tommy Hinkley, Steve Inwood 88 minutes
American Ninja star Dudikoff infiltrates Iraq on the eve of the Gulf war to save his brother from an evil general. Standard gung-ho action cheapie.

In a Stranger's Hand

Odyssey ODY 317
USA 1991

Certificate 15 Director David Greene Producer Chris DeFaria Screenplay Matthew Bombeck, based on a story by Matt Benjamin Lead Actors Robert Urich, Megan Gallagher, Isabella Hofmann 90 minutes
Child-napping thriller which shamelessly exploits present-day fears about child safety. A mother and a formerly selfish businessman search for a missing girl amid seedy street life.

Ironclads

First Independent VA 20154
USA 1991

Certificate PG Director Delbert Mann Producer David A. Rosemont Screenplay Harold Gast, story by James Retter Lead Actors Virginia Madsen, Alex Hyde-White, Reed Edward Diamond 91 minutes
Glossy, Turner Entertainment TV

drama depicting the events leading up to a crucial naval battle during the Civil War. Solid stuff.

The Killing Mind

20.20 Vision NVT 14607
USA 1991

Certificate 15 Director Michael Ray Rhodes Producer Carroll Newman Screenplay William W. Forsythe, Pat A. Victor Lead Actors Stephanie Zimbalist, Tony Bill, Daniel Roebuck, K. Todd Freeman 95 minutes
Thriller about an FBI psychological profiler, Isobel Neiman (Zimbalist), who tries to get inside the mind of the 'ballerina murderer'.

The Long Walk Home

FoxVideo 2192
USA 1990

Certificate PG Director Richard Pearce Producer Howard W. Koch Jr Screenplay John Cork Lead Actors Sissy Spacek, Whoopi Goldberg, Dwight Schultz, Dylan Baker 92 minutes
★ A black housekeeper (Whoopi Goldberg) joins the 1955 bus boycott - a milestone in the US civil rights movement - and her employer, Southern madam Sissy Spacek, finds her loyalties divided. An uplifting tale, powerfully told, finely played and with a timely anti-racist message.

Modern Love

Medusa MC 337
USA 1990

Certificate 15 Director/Producer/Screenplay Robby Benson Lead Actors Robby Benson, Karla DeVito, Rue McClanahan, Frankie Valli, Burt Reynolds 104 minutes
Standard comic fare about the tribulations of modern marriage and child-rearing, enlivened by Benson and DeVito's upbeat performances.

Murder in New Hampshire

Capital CHV 1032
USA 1991

Certificate 15 Director Joyce Chopra Producer Philip Kleinbart Screenplay William Wood, Joe Cacaci Lead Actors Helen Hunt, Chad Allen, Larry Drake, Howard Hesseman, Ken Howard 90 minutes
Tabloid titillation of the highest order. An uppity teacher (Hunt, nicely nasty) seduces a nerdy teenage boy and gets him to kill her dull husband. TV movie based on a true story.

Party Favourites

First View 20156
USA 1987

Certificate 18 Director Ed Hansen Producer R.T. Gervasoni Screenplay Leslee Shargel, Ed Hansen, Buck Flower Lead Actors Jeannie Winters, Marjorie Miller, Gail Thackray, Jill Johnson, Kent Stoddart 83 minutes
When a strip joint is closed down, the strippers form a pizza delivery company. Unsurprisingly, all their

clothes fall off immediately. Topless japes ensue. Cover still is *not* from the movie.

Sherlock Holmes and the Leading Lady

Braveworld BRV 10139

USA 1991

Certificate PG Director Peter Sasdy
Producers Frank Agrama, Alessandro Tasca, Daniele Lorenzano Screenplay Bob Shayne, H.R.F. Keating Lead Actors Christopher Lee, Patrick Macnee, Morgan Fairchild, Engelbert Humperdinck 180 minutes

Sherlock Holmes:

The Incident at Victoria Falls

Braveworld BRV 10140

USA 1991

Certificate PG Director Dill Corcoran
Producers Frank Agrama, Norman Siderow, Daniele Lorenzano Screenplay Bob Shayne, based on a story by Gerry O'Hara Lead Actors Christopher Lee, Patrick Macnee, Jenny Seagrove, Joss Ackland 180 minutes
Two star-studded TV series compilations about one of the worlds best-known detectives.

The Taking of Beverly Hills

Guild 8651

USA 1991

Certificate 15 Director Sidney J. Furie
Producer Graham Henderson Screenplay Rick Natkin, David Fuller Lead Actors Ken Wahl, Matt Frewer, Harley Jane Kozak, Robert Day 91 minutes
Disappointingly dull smash-'em-up about ex-cops ransacking the homes of the rich and famous. The once wonderful Wahl sports the worst haircut in the world and the endless explosions amount to little more than gales of hot air.

Takin' It All Off

First View VA 20155

USA 1987

Certificate 18 Director Ed Hansen
Producer R.T. Gervasoni Screenplay Ed Hansen, Buck Flower Lead Actors Kitten Natividad, Gail Thackray, Diane Pederson, Lauri Gilbert 92 minutes
Dated stripping sequel to *Takin' It Off*. Kitten Natividad tutors the strippers of the struggling 'Academy of Exotic Dance' for a gala show. Bizarrely, the cover still is from *Party Favours* (see above).

Till Death Us Do Part

Odyssey ODY 319

USA 1991

Certificate 15 Director Yves Simoneau
Producer Nick Gillott Screenplay Philip Rosenberg, based on the book by Vincent Bugliosi Lead Actors Treat Williams, Arliss Howard, Rebecca Jenkins, J.E. Freeman 94 minutes
Superior true TV drama about suave ladykiller Alan Palliko who married and murdered for profit. Courtroom thrills abound as heroic District Attorney Bugliosi gets his man.

Victim of Beauty

Odyssey ODY 321

USA 1991

Certificate 15 Director Roger Young
Producer Kay Hoffman Screenplay John Robert Bensink Lead Actors William Devane, Jeri Lynn Ryan, Michele Abrams, Nick Searcy 94 minutes
Beauty queen Dawn Smith helps to trap her sister's psycho kidnapper in this true-life TV drama.

Violation of Trust

Guild 8686

USA 1991

Certificate 15 Director Charles Correll
Producer Philip Kleinbart Screenplay Kathleen Rowell Lead Actors Katey Sagal, Jameson Parker, Robert Picardo, Alan Rachins, Charlotte Ross 90 minutes
Plodding teen torment drama about a schoolgirl who murders a rival for her boyfriend's affections.

Wild Texas Wind

Braveworld BRV 10141

USA 1991

Certificate 15 Director Joan Tewkesbury
Producer Richard L. O'Connor Screenplay Jon Carlin Lead Actors Dolly Parton, Gary Busey, Ray Benson, Willie Nelson 89 minutes
Country and Western melodramacum-domestic document, boosted by a sturdy cast. Music star Thiola Rayfield (Parton) suffers verbal and physical abuse at the hands of her bull-headed, manager-lover Justice (Busey).

Retail

Another 48 HRS.

CIC Video VHR 2477

USA 1990 Price £10.99

Certificate 18 Director Walter Hill
Eddie Murphy and Nick Nolte in a

noisy, sloppy sequel that lacks the humour of the original. (MFB No. 680)

Apocalypse Now

CIC Video VHR 2619

USA 1979 Price £9.99

Certificate 18

Director Francis Ford Coppola

★ An ambitious philosophical war film. In Vietnam, Martin Sheen is sent out to locate and destroy a renegade Colonel (Marlon Brando). (MFB No. 551) Widescreen version

Arachnophobia

Hollywood Pictures D910800

USA 1990 Price £10.99

Certificate PG Director Frank Marshall
Latin American spiders terrorise an ideal American family until rent-o-kill handyman John Goodman turns up to help. Genuinely scary. (MFB No. 684)

Born on the Fourth of July

CIC Video VHR 1562

USA 1989 Price £9.99

Certificate 18 Director Oliver Stone

★ Tom Cruise stars as an all-American boy who returns from the Vietnam war a paraplegic peacenik. Angry and unsettling. (MFB No. 675) Widescreen version

Breaking In

Braveworld Premiere STV 2125

USA 1989 Price £10.99

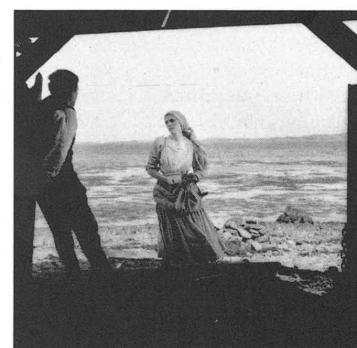
Certificate 15 Director Bill Forsyth
Gentle crime comedy about the partnership between a veteran safecracker (Burt Reynolds) and his teenage apprentice (Casey Siemaszko). (MFB No. 680)

Close Encounters of the Third Kind

Columbia TriStar CVR 30003

USA 1977 Price £10.99

Certificate PG Director Steven Spielberg
★ Time-extended, Panavision edition



Unconventional: Saskia Reeves in 'December Bride'

of Spielberg's splendid flying-saucer movie, with full scope given to Vilmos Zsigmond's dazzling white light photography. (MFB No. 531) Widescreen version

Crazy People

CIC Video VHR 2492

USA 1990 Price £10.99

Certificate 15 Director Tony Bill

A damp comedy about an ad-man (Dudley Moore) who checks into a mental institution and ends up proving that the insane can match Madison Avenue in creating absurd publicity slogans. Also stars Daryl Hannah. (MFB No. 680)

Dance with a Stranger

Braveworld Premiere STV 2137

UK 1984 Price £10.99

Certificate 15 Director Mike Newell

★ The story of Ruth Ellis, the last woman to be hanged in Britain. Moody 50s atmosphere and an impressive performance by Miranda Richardson as the woman who killed for love. (MFB No. 614)

December Bride

Connoisseur CR 073

UK 1990 Price £14.99

Certificate PG

Director Thaddeus O'Sullivan

★ Set in a remote Presbyterian village in turn of the century Ulster. Saskia



Deep in the jungle: 'Apocalypse Now'

Reeves stars as a headstrong young woman who scorns the church and community, and takes up with two brothers. Unsentimental and superbly photographed by Bruno de Keyzer. (MFB No. 685)

The Doors

Guild GLD 51142

USA 1991 Price £10.99

Certificate 18 Director Oliver Stone
Extravagant, enthusiastic and fetishistic homage to rock star Jim Morrison in which Stone continues his obsessive re-examination of the 60s. (MFB No. 687)

Eat the Peach

Connoisseur CR 075

Eire 1986 Price £14.99

Certificate PG Director Peter Ormrod
Comedy-thriller set in Irish border smuggling country, where a motorcycle enthusiast (Stephen Brennan) builds a 'wall of death' on his wife's vegetable patch after seeing Elvis Presley in *Roustabout*. (MFB No. 635)

Expresso Bongo

MCEG Virgin VVD 1044

UK 1959 Price £10.99

Certificate PG Director Val Guest
Discovered in the coffee bars of Soho, teenage Cliff Richard and a callow Hank Marvin are shot to fame by a smarmy agent (Laurence Harvey). A lively musical bubbling with period flavour. (MFB No. 312) B/W

Flight of the Intruder

CIC Video VHR 2620

USA 1991 Price £9.99

Certificate 15 Director John Milius
One tour of duty too many for macho military specialist Milius in this aggressive bomb-the-commies action pic set in Vietnam. (S&S September 1991, Rental Premiere)
Widescreen version

Gallipoli

CIC Video VHR 3019

Australia 1981 Price £9.99

Certificate 15 Director Peter Weir
Sober, gripping reconstruction of the bloodbath of the 1916 Gallipoli landings, with Mel Gibson in his finest acting role. (MFB No. 575)
Widescreen version

The Godfather Part III

CIC Video VHR 2514

USA 1990 Price £12.99

Certificate 18
Director Francis Ford Coppola
★ Ambitiously designed panel intended to complete Coppola's great Italian-American triptych of family business in the Corleone household, with Al Pacino becoming embroiled with the Vatican. Spoiled by the miscasting of Sofia Coppola in a pivotal role. (MFB No. 687)

The Green Ray (Le Rayon vert)

Artificial Eye ART 032

France 1986 Price £15.99

Certificate PG Director Eric Rohmer
★ Rohmer, abandoning his usual impeccable script, fabricates a triumph of improvisation with the help of gawky actress Marie Rivière and the strange, disjunctive atmosphere of France on its August holidays. (MFB No. 638) Subtitles

Harlem Nights

CIC Video VHR 2425

USA 1989 Price £10.99

Certificate 18 Director Eddie Murphy
Botched effort at self-aggrandisement for writer-producer-actor-director Eddie Murphy, with Richard Pryor and Della Reese wasted in the clichéd *Cotton Club* milieu. (MFB No. 678)

Henry V

Columbia TriStar CVR 32761

UK 1989 Price £12.99

Certificate PG
Director Kenneth Branagh
Stolid rehash of Shakespeare's play which ditches the triumphalism of Olivier's classic film version and stages the victory of Agincourt like a medieval Battle of the Somme. (MFB No. 669) Widescreen version

King Ralph

CIC Video VHR 1494

USA 1991 Price £10.99

Certificate PG Director David S. Ward
After a fluke accident that wipes out the royal family, Las Vegas roughneck Ralph (John Goodman) is made King of England and is helped by a mannerly Peter O'Toole. A worn-out comedy theme. (S&S May 1991)

Nostalgia (Nostalghia)

Artificial Eye ART 033

Italy 1983 Price £15.99

Certificate 15 Director Andrei Tarkovsky
★ Tarkovsky's first film to be made outside Russia wrings as much melancholy from the villages of Tuscany as from the marshy plains of his native home. A mysterious, masterful enquiry into art and religious feeling. (MFB No. 599) Subtitles

Problem Child

CIC Video VHR 1470

USA 1990 Price £10.99

Certificate PG Director Dennis Dugan
An orphaned child wrecks havoc in a small town that is home to his 32nd set of adoptive parents. Child actor Michael Oliver lacks the screen appeal of *Home Alone* star Macaulay Culkin. (MFB No. 683)

Reversal of Fortune

Columbia TriStar CVR 22127

USA 1990 Price £10.99

Certificate 15 Director Barbet Schroeder

★ The celebrated trial and public tribulations of Claus von Bulow as recounted by his lawyer Alan Dershowitz. A brilliant, brittle performance by Jeremy Irons as the aristocrat accused of the attempted murder of his comatose society hostess wife. (MFB No. 685)

The Room of Words

Braveworld Premiere STV 2121

Italy 1989 Price £10.99

Certificate 18 Director Joe D'Amato
Another *louche* look at the life and loose morals of Henry Miller and Anaïs Nin in Paris, and the love triangle they form with Miller's wife. (S&S May 1991, Rental Premiere)

Spymaker: The Secret Life of Ian Fleming

First Independent VA 30245

USA 1990 Price £10.99

Certificate 15

Director Ferdinand Fairfax

The tales of James Bond Jnr, slickly dramatised and with the young Jason Connery neatly cast as the adolescent novelist-cum-secret agent. (S&S June 1991, Rental Premiere)

Retail premiere

Cannonball Fever

First Fun VA 30243

USA 1989 Price £10.99

Certificate 15 Director Jim Drake
Producer Murray Shostak Screenplay Michael Short Lead Actors Melody Anderson, Peter Boyle, Donna Dixon, John Candy, Eugene Levy, Tim Matheson, The Smothers Brothers, Matt Frewer, Brooke Shields, Karl Lewis 92 minutes

Third of an increasingly frenetic series of trans-American car chase movies with a dumb cop round every corner and a guest star behind every wheel.



Playing with fire: Miranda Richardson in 'Dance with a Stranger'

Far Out Man

First Fun VA 30244

USA 1989 Price £10.99

Certificate 15 Director Tommy Chong
Producer Lisa M. Hansen Screenplay Tommy Chong Lead Actors C. Thomas Howell, Tommy Chong, Rae Dawn Chong, Martin Mull, Judd Nelson, Paul Bartel 85 minutes
Sad continuation of the legendary Cheech and Chong hippy comedy style which can do no better than to dream up a psychiatrist called Liddledick.

Masters of Menace

First Fun VA 30242

USA 1990 Price £10.99

Certificate 15 Director Daniel Raskov
Producers Lisa M. Hansen, Tino Insana Screenplay Tino Insana Lead Actors David Rasche, Catherine Bach, Lance Kinsey, David L. Lander 97 minutes
Hell's Angels thrills and spills comedy that comes several decades too late to send up *The Wild One* and *Easy Rider*. The language may be colourful but the jeans are far too clean.

Rabid Grannies

MCEG Virgin VVD 011

USA 1989 Price £10.99

Certificate 18 Director Emmanuel Kervyn Producers James Desert, Jonathan Rambert Screenplay Emmanuel Kervyn Lead Actors Danielle Daven, Anne Marie Fox, Jack Mayar, Elliot Lison, Françoise Moens 88 minutes
Two grisly old ladies invite their grandchildren to celebrate a birthday feast in their retirement home of horror and then set about devouring them.

Toxic Avenger Part II

MCEG Virgin VVD 1012

USA 1989 Price £10.99

Certificate 18 Directors/Producers Michael Herz, Lloyd Kaufman Screenplay Gay Partington-Terry, Lloyd Kaufman Lead Actors Ron Fazio, Phoebe Legere, John Altamura, Rick Collins, Rikiya Yasuoka 90 minutes
Cheap and nasty follow-up to the original in which our disfigured hero saves the world's ecosystem once again from the industrial conglomerate Apocalypse Inc.

Troma's War

MCEG Virgin VVD 1013

USA 1990 Price £10.99

Certificate 18 Directors Michael Herz, Samuel Weil Producers Lloyd Kaufman, Michael Herz Screenplay Mitchell Dana, Lloyd Kaufman Lead Actors Carolyn Beauchamp, Sean Bowen, Michael Ryder, Ara Romanoff, Jessica Dublin 90 minutes
A group of plane crash survivors play hide and shriek with a gang of terrorists on a tropical island. Third in the collection of Troma's carefully marketed cult films.

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Philistinism

From Lindsay Anderson

Adrian Turner writes (S&S June) that he doesn't understand why Bernard Kops quotes him ("for no apparent reason") as having told me that he did not like my films. Surely he has not forgotten that he said this when, as a functionary of the National Film Theatre, he was supposedly helping me to assemble an exhibition for the foyer when the NFT was showing some programmes of my work. And he is simply crass when he adds that, if he didn't like my films, "who cares anyway?" He was, after all, acting as a representative of the National Film Theatre and/or the BFI. It is disingenuous to make out that this put no responsibility on him.

I won't pretend that I was surprised by Adrian Turner's opinion, or by his discourtesy. I have long got used to the habit of the BFI of disregarding both the feelings and the achievements of film-makers who have, in the past, been associated with the place. Quite unlike the French (whom, in other respects, the BFI critics admire), the English 'intellectuals' have never made any effort to support their own artists, to understand their problems or to lend a hand. Adrian Turner's uncomprehending letter is a good example of this.

Of course, this is regrettable. *Sight and Sound* could always have supported with authority the fight against a complacent and largely philistine status quo. But for a long time it has been content to represent that complacency and philistinism, usually through its adoption of a detached and superior aestheticism. It is many years since Gavin Lambert almost got himself sacked for writing a strongly critical notice (wholly merited) of *The Blue Lamp*.

Fifty years ago, George Orwell wrote that "English intellectuals, especially the youngest ones, are markedly hostile to their own country... the philistinism of the English public alienates the intelligentsia still further". *Sight and Sound* and the NFT and BFI represent this intelligentsia today. Should I make it clear that I am not asking for specially indulgent treatment, but for an acknowledgment of responsibility? This is crying in the wilderness, I know; but I can't resist making the point, once again. London

Home movies

From Margaret O'Brien

I am writing to tell you about our forthcoming Grandparents' Day, which will take place at MOMI on 26 September.

The MOMI Home Movies Project aims to explore a little-researched area of film-making. As part of the project, the museum is inviting members of the public to lend old home movies of potential interest to the museum, for screening in the MOMI cinema. Not all the films which are submitted will be selected for screening.

Films of 9.5mm, 16mm, standard 8mm and Super 8mm can be accepted, but videos will only be shown if they are transcriptions from film. An application form is now available for people interested in exhibiting their films; films will only be accepted

when accompanied by an application form, and there will be a cut-off date in August. This is to allow time to check that the films are in a projectible condition and to group them into suitable programmes. After the exhibition day all films will be returned to their owners, although MOMI is hoping to create a permanent tribute to the home-movie-makers of Britain and, with the film-makers' permission, will copy some of the films on to video for display in the museum. This is not a competition and there are no prizes, but participants will have the pleasure of knowing that others will be able to enjoy their films too.

For an application form, please contact MOMI Education on 071 815 1339 or write to us at MOMI Education, South Bank, Waterloo, London SE1 8XT.

Gielgud's Romeo

From Luke McKernan

Just a small point to add about the answers to your competition this month (S&S June). John Gielgud's first Shakespearean role on film, if not in a feature film, was in 1924. There is a cinemagazine extract of him acting opposite Gwen Ffrangcon-Davies in *Romeo and Juliet*, which has been shown on television a couple of times (for instance, in *Omnibus* 'Gwen - A Juliet Remembered') and was shown during the *Guardian* lecture with Gielgud a few years back. I don't know the name of the cinemagazine, but it's most likely to be from the Pathé library.

National Film Archive, London W1

Life and art

From Geoff Andrew

While I consider recent issues of *Sight and Sound* to be a great improvement upon last year's editions, and while I was very pleased to see that you believed *The Long Day Closes* important enough to warrant a cover feature (S&S May), I must say I was disappointed by the quality of your coverage of Terence Davies' film. It matters not at all, of course, that my opinion of the film greatly differs from that of John Caughie. More distressing was the fact that Mr Caughie's piece seemed so poorly argued, and that he appeared to want the director to have made a very different film for very different reasons. Take, for example, the assertion that "there seems no historical reason" for the film being set in 1955-56, with Mr Caughie complaining that no mention is made of Suez, Hungary or the break-up of the left. The reason, quite clearly, for the film's temporal setting is that the boy-hero (Davies himself) was moving from junior school to secondary school at that time, a move which made a great difference to his emotional and psychological life, and which was, for him, the beginning of a loss of innocence. And the absence of allusions to events in the wider, political sphere may surely be explained by the fact that, as a lonely, introspective eleven-year-old, Davies was probably barely aware of Suez, Hungary or the break-up of the left. Moreover, even if he had been as politically precocious as Mr Caughie seems to have been, these matters are quite simply not the subject of Davies' film.

This sort of misguided nit-picking is characteristic of Mr Caughie's article. At one point, pointing out that both the cruel father and the anger he inspired in *Distant Voices, Still Lives* are missing from the new



Innocent happiness:
'The Long Day Closes'

film, Mr Caughie even seems to be begrudging Davies his few years of intense, innocent happiness! Without the suffering, the characters are "deprived of emotional complexity"; evidently, for the sake of his art - or of those who would write about it - Davies should have suffered more!

Underlying Mr Caughie's often jargonistic 'argument' there is a forlorn subjectivism at work, manifested in his frequent use of phrases like "I am not convinced", "for me", "seems to me". This would be all very well did not the writer include, as part of his critique of Davies, the implicit criticism that the film itself is a hopelessly subjective representation of a specific moment in Britain's social history. Apparently, what's good for the goose is not good for the gander. Similarly, it would have been better, surely, had he managed to describe what he considers the film's "most strikingly virtuosic sequence" accurately; his account of the now celebrated overhead shots towards the end of the film simply does not match what is actually there on the screen.

London NW10

Hearing world

From Tristram Powell

Your film critic compares my television film *The Count of Solar* with Truffaut's feature film *L'Enfant sauvage* (S&S May) and decides that the latter has "arguably... the more interesting approach to the problematic area of physical disability". The starting points of the two films are similar, but their intentions are very different. The feral boy in Truffaut's film is not, as she states, a "deaf-mute", nor does he suffer from any physical disabilities. It is the boy's mind, untouched by nurtured influences, that Truffaut explores so beautifully in the film.

In *The Count of Solar*, an abandoned deaf boy is taught sign language. The revelation that follows, the story of disinheritance, is intended to mirror the disinheritance of deaf people as a minority, so often obliged to exist on the margins of the hearing world. The film also tries to suggest that it is we hearing people who impose our definitions of normality and 'physical disability' on those who cannot hear as we do. It is not intended to be a "humanitarian plea", which sounds dangerously close to condescension.

London SW9

Addenda and corrigenda

● *The Silence of the Lambs* (reviewed S&S Vol.1, No.2, p.62). The character Mr Bimmel is played by Harry Northrup, not spelled as printed.

● *Marked for Death* (reviewed S&S Vol.1, No.2, p.54). The character Duvall is played by Arlen Dean Snyder, not spelled as printed.

● *K2* (reviewed S&S Vol.1, No.10, p.50). The score composed by Chaz Jankel for this film was only used in the US; a score by Hans Zimmer was used in all other territories.

● *Ricochet* (reviewed S&S Vol.2, No.1, p.58). The wife of Nick Styles (Denzel Washington) is Alice (Victoria Dillard), and not Gail as stated in the synopsis of this film.

● *The Long Day Closes* (reviewed S&S Vol.2, No.2, p.44). The neighbouring housewife referred to as Helen in the synopsis of this film is in fact Edna (Tina Malone); the eponymous vespers are sung by a male choir, not as stated.

Goonhilly days

Benjamin Woolley

Thirty years ago this month, Raymond Baxter stood in the control room of the Post Office's satellite communications base at Goonhilly, peering expectantly at a blank television screen. Minutes passed and nothing appeared. With increasing desperation, engineers twiddled knobs and consulted panels of indicator lights. Still nothing. Time seemed to be running out. And then he saw it. Just a flicker, the merest outline of a man's head. And there it was! Ecstasy! The just-recognisable face of the chairman of AT&T.

Clearly it was not the picture's content that excited Baxter. It was the medium that had delivered it: he was witnessing what were supposed to be the first live television pictures ever to be beamed across the Atlantic.

They had been carried by Telstar, AT&T's communication satellite. Unfortunately, as Telstar emerged from behind the horizon at the appointed hour, Goonhilly couldn't find it. Worse, the French could – indeed, they managed to get a beautifully clear signal, and acknowledged its receipt by beaming back Yves Montand in full song. Goonhilly, meanwhile, just could not lock on, leaving Baxter to pad as the screen remained obstinately pictureless. Only in the final minute of transmission did they manage to reward the old pro's persistence.

Nevertheless, it was an historic moment and its anniversary provides a fitting opportunity to recall the man who, more than any other, anticipated its significance: Marshall McLuhan. Nowadays, the man is barely known; erased from academic history, all but one of his books are now out of print. Those who have heard the name generally associate it with a scene from *Annie Hall*. Woody Allen, queuing to see a movie, is prompted to retrieve the great man from behind a cheeseplant in a cinema foyer to prove that an insufferable pseud who is pontificating noisily about McLuhan's theo-



Marshall McLuhan: the medium of the message

ries has completely misunderstood them.

It has to be said that the insufferable pseud wasn't alone. McLuhan could be willfully opaque. During interviews, he delighted in baiting his interlocutors with deeply enigmatic replies. Nevertheless, as Allen's use of him demonstrated, he was something of a phenomenon. Described by *Family Circle* magazine as "the most sought-after dinner guest of our time", he was the prototype media guru, a tweed-jacketed, Catholic literary academic with an interest in Symbolist poets who ended up the subject of network television specials and popular magazine profiles.

What attracted all this attention was a knack for expressing, if perhaps not entirely explaining, the spirit of the times that events such as the Telstar link-up seemed to inaugurate. According to McLuhan, the world we experience is the world mediated by the prevailing technology of communication. Since the Renaissance, our view of the world had been determined by print. Print prompts us to classify, label, adopt a detached point of view. Everything else that characterised Western culture – rationalism, individualism, even nationalism – he saw as the product of

'Telstar emerged from behind the horizon at the appointed hour, Goonhilly couldn't find it. Worse, the French could – indeed, they managed to get a beautifully clear signal, and acknowledged its receipt by beaming back Yves Montand'

these qualities. 'Electric' media, he argued, would change all that. The print world would be overwhelmed by the much bigger universe of information delivered by satellite, telephones, telex and computers. These were wiring our very nervous systems into the globe, enabling us to see the world in a quite different way, in a more fragmented and intense way. Pictures beamed live across the ocean were causing the collapse of physical space, turning the world into what McLuhan memorably described as a "global village".

He summed up this theory in the catchphrase "the Medium is the Message". This was to become his best-known slogan, celebrated for being catchy and almost completely incomprehensible. Even McLuhan wasn't clear as to what it might mean. To begin with, his definition of media was highly unconventional, embracing everything from television and print to lightbulbs, the message carried by a lightbulb being whatever it illuminates. Nevertheless, the principle he was trying to express was straightforward: that media aren't simply transparent communications channels.

McLuhan has been criticised for many things: slack terminology, technological determinism, primitive political analysis, playing to the gallery. And he was by no means the first to argue that media influence the messages they carry. But he did provide a language, a way of thinking, that helped make sense of the phenomenal rate of change that began with the introduction of electronic media in the 60s and which continues today. He therefore deserves more than our failing memory of him. In 1965, Tom Wolfe wrote: "There were many studs of the business world, breakfast-food-package designers, television-network creative-department vice presidents, advertising 'media reps', lighting-fixture fortune heirs, patent lawyers, industrial spies, we-need-vision board chairmen – all sorts of business studs, as I say, wondering if McLuhan... was right". Well, it seems he was.

PROFESSOR POTEMKIN'S COMPETITION



The winner of our May competition, 'Capital Crimes', was Linda Davison of Telford, who won the first prize of a weekend for two at Nottingham's Festival

of Crime & Mystery. Some readers (Casper Tybjerg and Nick Morgan, both of London) were alert enough to notice an error of fact implicit in the wording of Question 8. Visconti's 'Osessione' was not the first European film drawn from 'The Postman Always Rings Twice' – that honour goes to Pierre Chenal's 'Le Dernier tournant' (1939). On Question 1, Bryan Clarkson of Milton Keynes was among several Bible-bashers anxious to point out that 'Thou Shalt Not Kill' is the sixth and not the fifth commandment. And Andrew Peacock made the subversive suggestion that the murder of Liberty Valance

(Question 7) be referred back to the Court of Appeal, with fresh charges made out against James Stewart, whom he still suspects.

To coincide with the launch of Electric Pictures' new video label in July, all of the above will receive a special runners-up prize of one of Electric's new sell-through releases – 'Chocolate', 'Sweetie', 'The Unbelievable Truth' or 'Life Is a Long Quiet River'.

For the winners of this month's competition ('The Rain in Spain', concocted in honour of the hosts of the Olympic Games and Expo 92), the 16th Cambridge Film Festival (9-26 July) is pleased to offer tickets to the screening of Dreyer's 'The Passion of Joan of Arc', to be held outdoors in the New Court of St John's College and accompanied by a live performance of Arnaud Petit's score. The first prize is a pair of tickets to the screening on Saturday 25 July with overnight accommodation for two at St John's College

and train travel courtesy of Network South East. Three runners-up will each receive a pair of tickets for 'The Passion of Joan of Arc'. The festival covers films from the Cannes and Berlin festivals, this year including the Palme d'Or winner 'The Best Intentions'. Answer all ten questions correctly, and send them on a postcard, with a daytime telephone number, by 15 July, to Professor Potemkin, Sight and Sound, 21 Stephen Street, London W1P 1PL (or fax 071-436 2327). This competition is open to residents of the UK only.

1. In which recent Spanish film comedy does the gazpacho get spiked with a Mickey Finn?
2. Who was compared to James Dean after playing the romantic lead in 'The Saragossa Manuscript'?
3. Joseph von Sternberg made seven classic films with the late Marlene Dietrich. Which one was set in Spain?

4. Who directed a recent film, starring The Pogues, on Spanish desert locations already immortalised in the spaghetti Westerns of Sergio Leone?

5. Which Luis Buñuel film was banned by Franco even though the director had been invited home to Spain to make it?

6. Who acted in both 'El Cid' and 'Man of La Mancha'?

7. Which Hollywood B-movie director was a former matador who entered the cinema as the bullfight adviser on 'Blood and Sand'?

8. Name the third of Carlos Saura's trilogy of 'flamenco' films, made with choreographer Antonio Gades.

9. Which Spanish city was the setting for Jack Nicholson's first meeting with Maria Schneider in 'The Passenger'?

10. Identify the celebrated film director and raconteur whose ashes now repose at the bottom of a well on an Andalusian ranch.

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9th-26th JULY 1992

Festival highlights include:

Premieres of:

Stephen Gyllenhaal's
WATERLAND

David Lynch's
TWIN PEAKS-FIRE WALK WITH ME

Alison Anders'
GAS, FOOD, LODGING

Jim Jarmusch's
NIGHT ON EARTH

Beeban Kidron's
ANTONIA AND JANE

Krystoff Zanussi's
THE TOUCH

Jonathan Lynn's
MY COUSIN VINNY

Tom Kalin's
SWOON

Michael Apted's
INCIDENT AT OGLALA

Leos Carax's
LES AMANTS DU PONT NEUF

Michelle Deville's
TOUTES PEINES CONFONDUES

Claude Chabrol's
MADAME BOVARY

Chris Monger's
JUST LIKE A WOMAN

For a fully illustrated brochure please
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THE PASSION OF JOAN OF ARC -
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